

Mexican Life

Mexico's Monthly Review

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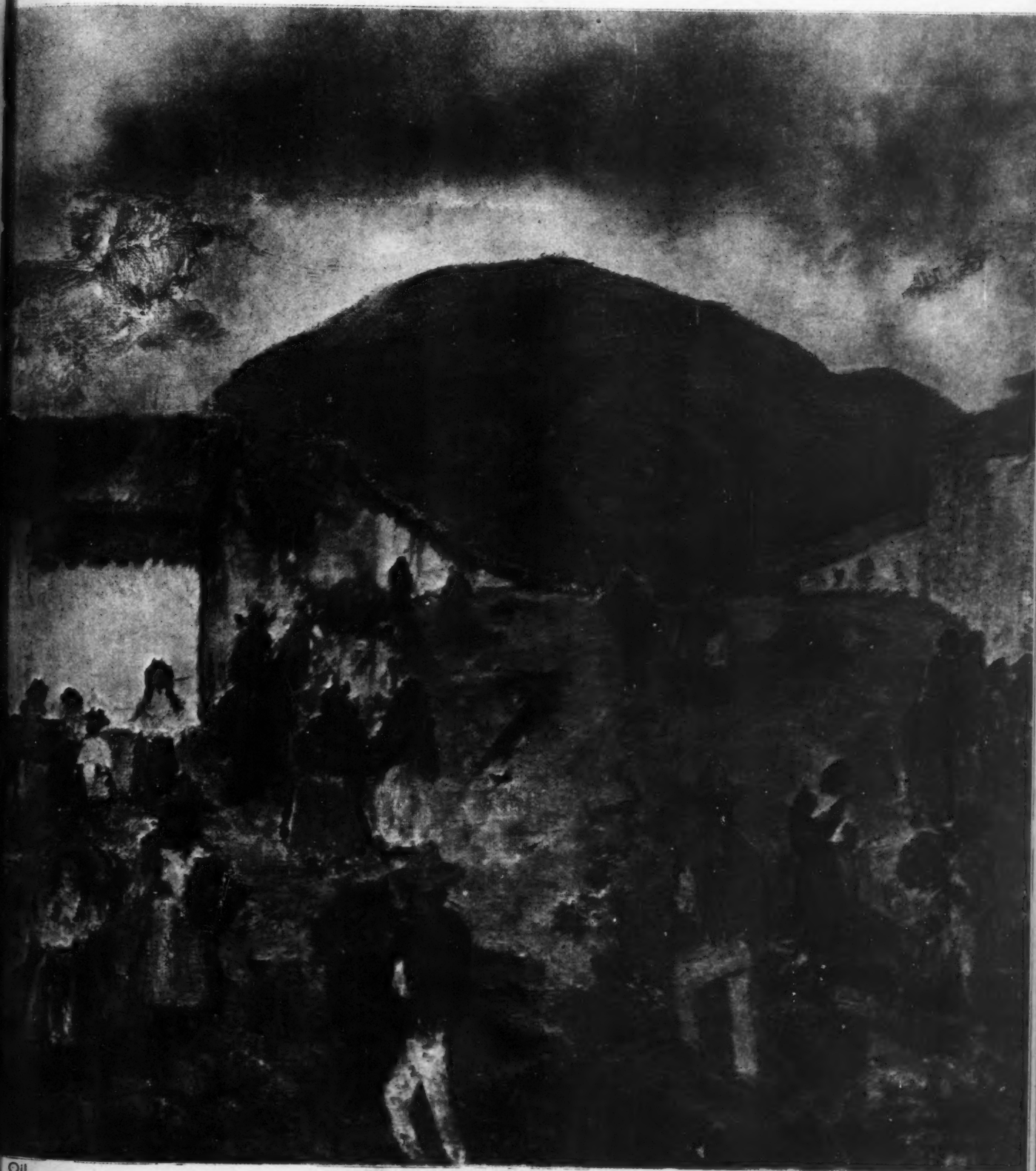
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By Edith Hoyt



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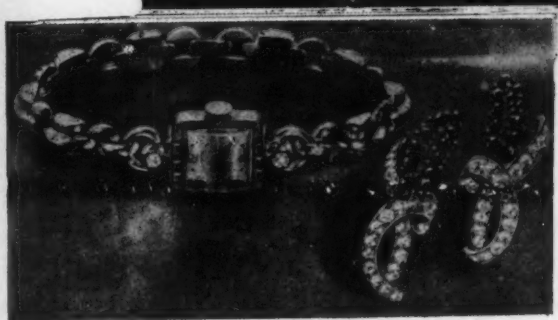
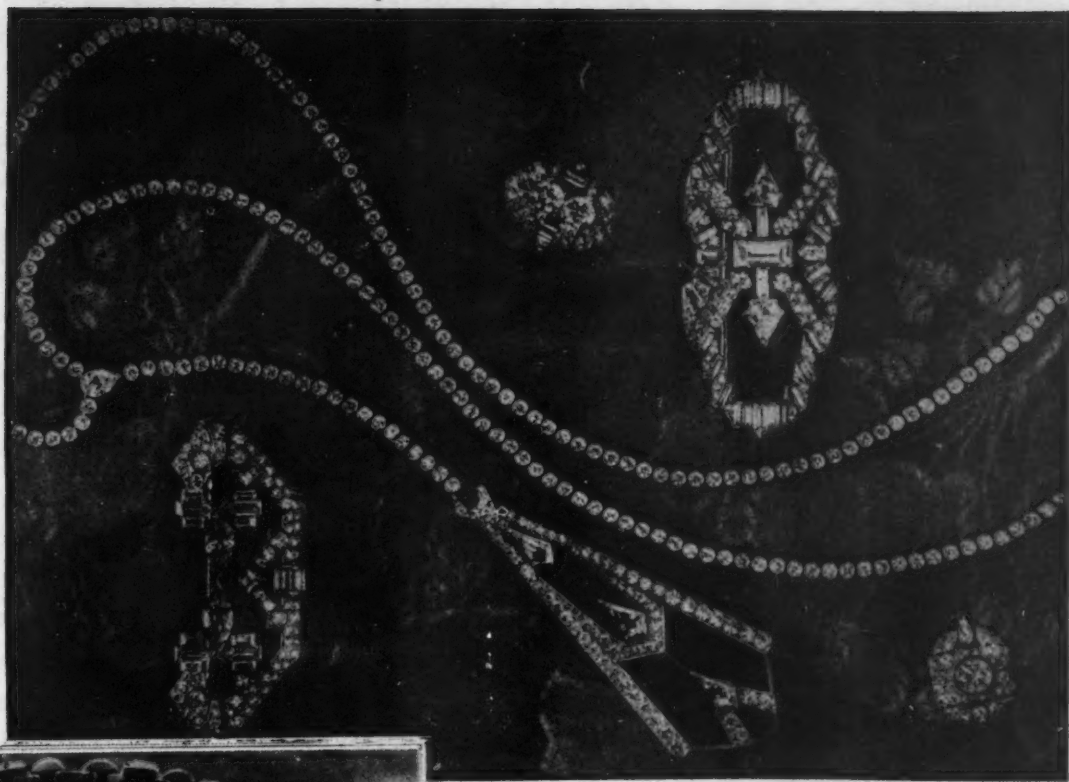
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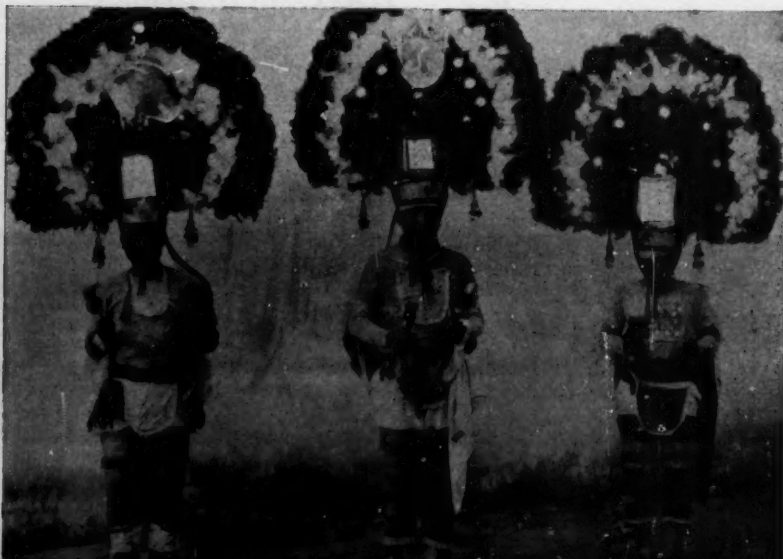
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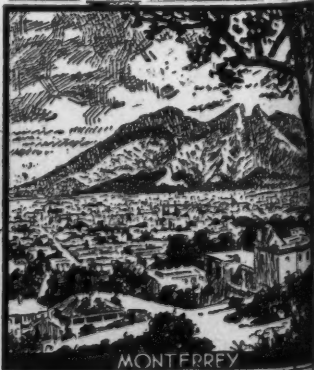
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HOWARD S. PHILLIPS

EDITOR

Brighter Economic Prospects

THE current year promises to bring about a marked improvement in Mexico's economic situation. Taking in consideration the principal determinative factors, the country's economic prospects seem brighter to day than they have been at any time since the end of the war. This favorable change must be largely attributed to the wise financial policy and the constructive program pursued by the administration of President Alemán—the propitious measures that coped with serious emergencies, and the consistent nation-wide plan which is greatly enlarging the scope of agricultural production.

It is due to these two contributive factors—i.e., the devaluation of the peso in foreign exchange, and the significant increase in national production—that during the final months of the past year, for the first time since 1943, Mexico achieved a favorable balance in its foreign trade. Present indications, moreover, are toward a steadily growing margin in Mexico's favor during the forthcoming months. This results from the increased volume of the country's exports, which on the other hand result from an increased volume of production.

Large extensions of tillable soil added to the national acreage by completed irrigation projects have contributed toward a signal increase in the size of the national crop. In exact figures, this increase, since Miguel Alemán assumed the Presidency three years ago, represents a rise from 4,866,699 to 6,237,678 metric tons.

In production of corn, which is Mexico's basic food crop, for the first time in its history the yield not only sufficed last year for all national needs but also provided a considerable surplus for export. This crop, amounting in 1946 to 2,284,000 tons, reached last year a volume of 2,832,000, signifying a gain of 548,000 tons.

The wheat crop rose from 360,000 tons in 1946 to 503,000 last year, representing an increase of 143,000 tons. This unprecedented increase has enabled Mexico to reduce its imports of this cereal to a half, or from 400,000 tons it was compelled to buy abroad in 1946 to approximately 200,000 last year.

The year's most spectacular increase has been achieved in the production of cotton, which amounts to 880,000 bales, as compared with 396,000 in 1946. 600,000 bales of this total have been sold abroad, yielding over 70 million dollars. The sugar harvest, likewise exceeding all previous records, provided 645,000 metric tons of refined sugar for export after satisfying the domestic needs.

Such large-scale exports of agricultural surplus have tended last year to swing the balance of international trade in Mexico's favor to the approximate extent of 82 million pesos, as against an adverse balance of 290 million pesos in 1948 and over a billion pesos in 1947.

With a further increase of tillable acreage result-

ing from the pending completion of additional irrigation projects Mexico's agricultural production in 1950 should be considerably larger than that of the foregone year, signifying a corresponding increase in its export volume, and a proportionately growing dollar income.

Once this favorable trend is firmly established and Mexico is assured of an adequate dollar reserve, it is reasonable to assume that the government will see fit to modify the restrictions on imports of certain goods, which should benefit retail trade and help to counteract the continuous inflation of living costs.

Added to the prosperous state of agriculture there are other quite favorable factors which indicate a continued expansion of national economy during the current year. Of these, the notable progress made in recent times by the petroleum industry can be considered as the most important. The discovery of new fields, due to intensified drilling, has brought up during the last twelve months the daily production figure from 130,000 to 185,000 barrels. The directing officials of this industry estimate upon safe calculations that this figure will reach 250,000 barrels before the end of this year. This should enable Mexico to export at least 100,000 barrels daily, which in terms of dollar income should in itself more than suffice for the maintenance of a favorable trade balance.

The announcement recently made by the officials of the Mexico-United States Commission for the Eradication of the Foot-and Mouth Disease to the effect that the campaign this commission has been conducting since the outbreak of this plague three years ago is to be definitely concluded before the middle of this year, lends an additional note of optimism to the bright prospects for the year in course. Entailing an enormous material loss to the nation and exposing at its peak 15,000,000 head of domestic stock to infection, this plague was one of the gravest problems confronting the government. The final eradication of this plague will put an end to a serious drain of national wealth and will bring new life and prosperity to the stock-breeding industry.

The immediate future in the industrial field, while not as clearly defined is likewise replete of bright promise. Aided by the legal restriction of competitive imports and the devaluated peso, as much as by the continuously growing domestic consumption, most of the industries that have been created in recent years are now reaching their fullest degree of efficiency and are operating on a quite profitable basis. Since the future prosperity of industrialization must be determined by the expanding norms of rational agriculture and the consequent elevation in the living standards of the rural population, such future can be viewed with obvious optimism.

Mexico is yet undergoing a process of accelerated economic transition. But the serious hardships this process entailed in recent years are now over. 1950 should signify a turning point to better times.

Death Takes a Holiday

By Henry Albert Phillips

TZINTZUNTZAN is about fourteen miles across the lake from Patzcuaro. The town and its surroundings are now but a moldering shadow of its former greatnesses, which it attained twice over, among the Designs for Mexico. In pre-Conquest times it was capital of the Tarascan Empire and many formidable remains of that ancient city are still visible in the form of T-shaped mounds and quantities of idols. Later came the founding of one of the important early cities of Mexico which, like its Tarascan predecessor, seems rapidly crumbling into dust. The first monastery in Mexico, established in 1529 is but a shell. The great bells were taken from the towers of the several churches that half surround the spacious open park, and hung in the trees before the towers fell. Here were once the churchyard and gardens with a score of gnarled centuries-old olive trees still surviving; the original cross and place where the Indian converts were baptized by the thousands and the undecipherable gravestones. The two fine old baroque basilicas have rare wooden ceilings. Many of the great foundation stones bear pagan carvings showing they had been taken from the Indian temples. I find two tall candles burning before the wooden crucifix near the tottering portals, the tapers stuck into the extended hands of two stone Aztec gods! A bouquet of fresh flowers is fastened midway, near the realistically bleeding feet of an agonized Christ who wears an embroidered skirt. I learned that Cardenas had made Tzintzuntzan a gift of electric street lights and a water system, neither of which ever became popular. The natives went to bed with the coming of darkness and the street lamps annoyed them;

they still preferred to use the old wells where for generations they had met socially, to talk and gossip.

* * *

Patzcuaro was the end of all motor roads, so one noon I took the famous La Capital Express and pushed on to Uruapan. It offered something indefinitely different from any other Mexican town I had visited. For one thing, there was the Hotel Mirador, kept by a gentleman who had come from the United States some forty-odd years before to build a railroad and—as has been so countless often the case—never left Mexico again. It fulfilled its promise of a “modern, luxurious hotel,” by being delightfully crude with a wooden staircase of great height to the balcony of so-called patio in the center. The four walls of the cozy dining room were decorated with a series of astonishingly good frescoes depicting native life.

I strolled out into that unique double-plaza, just before our late dinner. The town had been laid out with a Spanish gesture of the grandiose on this Plaza de Revolucion. It was flanked by a pretentious monument to Zapata presented by a generous governor of the state. It was inscribed: “To Emiliano Zapata, who gave the Revolution a real ideal and the town an economic standard to fight for.” It was All Saints’ Eve and a fiesta throng was abroad. The major portion seemed to be church-bound. I followed those entering the nearer of the two templos facing the open square. The throng—nearly all Indians—crowded the building to the doors. I was swept along halfway up to the high altar, standing there alone, half awamped by the rising tide of kneelers like an island in a swirling sea, yet apparently unnoticed.

It was the Big Night, and later I found the plaza as crowded as the church had been, all the Indians for miles around having come in to celebrate. One end of the square was devoted to the market, the other to the social amenities. Carnival spirit, with the proper diversions, was everywhere. Everybody with black crepe-paper bows, gay little candy lambs with pink spots and coffins and death’s-heads of sugar—against the coming Days of the Dead. Also they were loading up with fiesta delicacies to set their tables on the morrow’s evening for their departed loved ones, who always returned on that occasion. The toy market flourished, for it is only comparatively recently and in foreign-contaminated cities that Christmas has supplanted All Souls’ Eve as the great giving-of-gifts festival. I patronized a miniature shooting gallery where a woman had set up tiny targets to be shot at at five paces with an air rifle: five shots, ten centavos. Wild shots went off into the crowd.

Then an extraordinary band concert began; two of them at one time. It represented a controversy between two labor unions. The Carpenters Union had gained possession of the kiosk; the Agrarians had been forced to perform beneath the portales. For one hour it was a hot contest, each trying to outdo the other in noise and wind. Each band was surrounded by its feudal vassals who cheered for their own and hooted at the other.

Oil.

By Jose L. Gutierrez.





Water Color.

By Roberto de la Cueva.

Juchitán Wedding

By Gertrude Diamant

I had met Alpha in a little bookstore on the Avenue Hidalgo. Señor García who kept the store was small, bald and toothless, but for all that a great student of women. Usually after I had bought the books he recommended (and he was far more useful than all the catalogues in Mexico's disorganized libraries), he would offer me a cigarette and we would smoke while he discussed the question of feminine charm. He found American women very pretty, but basically unattractive. 'They walk badly,' he said, 'and their voices are shrill and they lack repose. But take the women of my tierra. I think they have caught something of the palm trees in their bearing, and when they walk it is like the movement of the wind through the palms. Wait,' he urged me once, 'I will introduce you to a woman of my tierra.'

Alpha came in later, and I found her beautiful. Her face is like a primitive mask, full of austere power. And she walks superbly. When she was a little girl in her native Juchitán she went to market barefoot and carrying a basket of fruit on her head. Then she wore the loose flowing garments of her village, but now even the short ugly city dress could not disguise the rhythm and grace of her walk. She walks with head and back very erect, all the movement in her hips and thighs; and it is something to watch, like a dance. She had come to Mexico City to study nursing, and soon after I met she returned to her village, to fight against the appalling mortality from child-birth, against malaria and dysentery and the mysterious pinto that turns the skin blue.

She wrote me to come to Juchitán. She said now was the time to come because the north wind was blowing, cooling the tropics, and besides there would be a wedding in the village which I might want to see. So I bought quinine and a woven bag to hold my things, and consigned myself to the ordeal of travel on a second-class train. Juchitán is a little town on the tropical isthmus of Tehuantepec, where Mexico narrows between the two oceans. In space it is not far from the capital, but in time a slow fifty two-hour ride on the narrow-gauge National Railway, through heat and jungle. Alpha met me at the station. She wore the colorful costume of her village—the full flowered skirt and the loose sleeveless blouse, bright red and yellow, which bears the Indian name huipil. She said the Government doctor had come, and she would have to go to the health station to change into her uniform. But her cousin was there to drive me to the house.

'You are from over there?' he asked shyly, when the car was in motion. It was an old Ford, one of the three cars in Juchitán.

'From New York,' I specified, for 'over there' means, vaguely, the United States.

'I understand it is very cold there. I could not live there because of the cold.'

'That is only in the winter.'

'Yes, that's just it. The question of winter. We are in winter now, and I find it too cold. This north wind, it will blow for months.'

It blew relentlessly, herding all the dust of the

Isthmus before it. But save for the dust the weather was like the May of a Northern poet, like the exalted blue days of wind and brilliant sky that come in the spring after a rain. In the North such days are rare and must be plucked at once. But here there was promise of months of them, a miracle like the month of Sundays.

'Of course in the capital it is often much colder,' Alpha's cousin continued. 'I am studying in the capital.' He was very proud. 'But here I spend the vacation.'

Vacation meant to me tennis flannels and sports, and I asked him what there was to do.

'Do?' he shrugged without understand. 'Nothing. I pass the time tranquilly.'

We turned off the road and we were in Juchitán. Mexican towns and villages have a way of impressing themselves in sharp visual images that remain vividly in the memory like an inner painting, the essential line and color of a place. Thus Monterrey is a wide avenue white with sun, and a dark soaring monument against the hot purple sierra. Taxco is a climb of red-tiled roofs over a hill and the red tiles of the Cathedral dome flashing in the sun. Of Juchitán I remember the flatness and squareness of white adobe houses, the severe line of a white wall joining the sky; and nothing to break the sweep of sky but a solitary palm, lifting shaggy fronds on a curving trunk. And always the wind driving veils of dust through the unpaved streets, and the women walking in the wind and the dust, their skirts blowing.

Alpha's aunts came out to welcome me. In the big white-walled living-room they brought atole to drink, and water in an earthen jar, talking among themselves in Zapotecan but with Spanish for me. They spread a fresh sheet on the bed, and then, shyly smiling, they withdrew and left me alone to sleep. When I awoke, a little girl was standing in the doorway and staring at me. She fled when I moved, leaving the door ajar, and I looked out at the shaded back portico with its two massive Spanish pillars framing the stone-paved patio. The women were working, carrying gourds with water across the patio—a slow stately parade as if they had all eternity for doing things, and time did not matter. Nor does time matter in Juchitán. It may be because of the wind eternally blowing, making a vast monotony of sound out of day and night, so that one does not notice the treacherous hours slipping away; or perhaps it's because all the things that make time are lacking. Where there are factory whistles, crowds, trains, real estate developments, spring millinery, sales and winter clothes to put away, one must live with an eye on the clock and the calendar. But in Juchitán there is only the wind and the dust, rumbling ox-carts and a sleepy river, the ancient pageantry of the marketplace, days eternally the same.

I watched the slow motion of the women until I dozed off again, and when I awoke the door was closed and the room dark. It was the main living-room of the house, but in complete disorder. Carved chests and bolts of cloth and pottery piled helter-skelter, a confusion of furniture from which one picked out an altar with a figure of the Virgin, a dressing-table laden with Pond's cold cream and powder, a sewing machine. Two hammocks strung across the width of the room cleared the disorder like boats over the waves. They were for sleeping in the hot weather, but no one had thought to remove them now that they were not needed. But perhaps this confusion too reflected the Juchitán idea. For order represents our fear and nervousness. We create ordered interiors as a protest over the passing of things, to define our mortal lives against the void of time. Yet where no one

is worried about time and mortality, why bother with ordered interiors?

The door opened and Alpha's Aunt Electra came in. I had noticed her before because, unlike the other women, she had green eyes, and except for her dark skin she looked so much like an aunt of mine that I had trouble not to call her by that aunt's name. She had changed her everyday red and yellow huipil for one splendidly embroidered in black and gold, and instead of her plain black skirt she wore a red embroidered one, with the ceremonial white pleated ruffle at the bottom. In the morning she had gone barefoot, but now she put on high-heeled shoes. Then, seated at the dressing-table, she began to smear her face with the Pond's cold cream, as expertly as any débutante who has endorsed the product. 'For the dust,' she said. 'Don't you want some?' She seemed puzzled when I said no.

'But you are coming with us?'

She told me about the wedding in the village. There would be four dances, all out-of-doors, the first at the home of the bride's godmother. Already the men had gone to help build the canopy of branches for the dance, and the women were making ready for a visit to the godmother. The girl who was getting married belonged to the well to do class, and the wedding festivities would absorb all the village, at least all the families that lived in the stone and adobe houses, but not those that lived in the grass huts near the river. These are the poor of Juchitán. They might trail the wedding procession through the streets, and stand looking in on the dances, but they could not be counted as wedding guests.

'Yes, of course I am coming,' I said, and Electra nodded, pleased, and gave me a handkerchief with eggs tied in it. All the women carried eggs tied in a handkerchief, and we went out together into the dusty street.

In the godmother's house the women who had come before us sat against the wall, a fresco of bright huipils, flowing skirts sculptured at the bottom with stiff white ruffles, dark faces framed in wreathed braids. The godmother was old as an ancient deity. She sat on the floor sifting flour. There was a metate for grinding corn, and each woman in turn rose and knelt at the metate and ground some of the corn grains. From outside where the men were building the canopy came bursts of laughter. First the voice of one man speaking, and then the ribald burst of laughter. But the women worked in a grave silence, as if the event they were preparing were not a marriage but had to do with death. Each guest on entering gave eggs to the godmother, and dropped a coin into a gourd on the floor. I had no change and put in a peso. The old woman looked at it, consulted in Zapotecan with another old woman, and then carefully counted out nine coins from the gourd. She was making change of the peso and she brought it to me and said gravely: 'Each one gives only ten centavos.' And I could not tell whether I was being rebuked for vain-glorious display, or because I had broken the custom. Then we had sweet biscuits and atole flavored with cinnamon and chocolate, and everyone received a cigarette wrapped in paper. Not to be wrong again, I put mine behind my ear when I saw all the other women doing that.

After a while Electra looked at me. 'Do we go?' she asked.

'As you wish.'

'We go, then?'

'When you are ready.'

But she rose and I followed her out, and we walked toward the plaza while I wondered if I had com-

Continued on page 53



Water Color.

By Alfred C. Ybarra.

Swamp Grass and a Quicksand

By Dana Lamb

FOR days the problem of reaching Aguas Pocas had been our chief preoccupation. The great lagoon, in theory at least, had promised easy transport down the coast. Its many islands, which spanned its length like links in a chain, offered additional protection against the norther. We could sail snugly between them and the land to seaward. Rivers emptied into these tidal lagoons, and though the water was brackish, animals could drink it. There would be game to supplement our food supply. But as we now gazed upon its broad expanse, it seemed that the effort expended in getting here had won for us only a Pyrrhic victory.

We spent the first few minutes after our arrival in giving our pinolillo-blackened bodies a vigorous scrubdown with sand. We rolled over and over in the shallow water in an effort to dislodge them. This gave only temporary respite, since hundreds of them had burrowed under the skin, and would have to be dug out. Then, refreshed by the brief bath and clean clothes, we searched for a place to set up camp.

As far as the eye could see in all directions there were birds: herons, cranes, flamingos, ducks, and multitudes of tiny sandpipers wading ankle-deep in the shallow lagoon. Great piled-up clouds, stained with the flame of the setting sun, cast a rosy glow over the tranquil water. A hundred square miles of it, lovely to look at—and only six inches deep. To the west, and out towards the centre of the lagoon, there appeared to be an island, perhaps three miles away. This, with the exception of the mainland we had left, was the nearest land in sight.

Since the lagoon was too shallow to float the canoe with our weight in it, we had to drag it. Only

the thought of a hot meal, and a long, uninterrupted sleep in the tent gave us the strength to do this. To force ourselves over those three long miles to the island was slow torture. Also there were many places where the water was too shallow to float even the empty boat. Then we had to stop and hunt until we found a deeper channel.

At nine o'clock when we finally reached the shore of the island our bubble burst. Gone were our hopes of a dry camp, a hot meal; and the longed-for opportunity to rid ourselves of the pinolillos. For the island was only a ring of mangrove roots surrounding a boggy swamp. There was no alternative but to look further on. We continued to drag the canoe along the shore of the swamp, always hoping to find a bit of dry land. And the ticks continued to raise merry hell. When we could find a spot of water two feet deep, we lay down in it. But even this momentary relief was denied to us—swarms of malarial mosquitoes stung our unprotected faces.

The lagoon was now deep enough to float the canoe. I urged Ginger to lie down in the cockpit and cover herself with canvas for protection against the mosquitoes, while I paddled on to another island that loomed ahead. The point of land as I paddled towards it took on the quality of a mirage, now retreating, now advancing. I wondered vaguely if we should ever reach it. We were lost in an aqueous world of swamps, mangroves, pinolillos, and mosquitoes. I repeated the words soundlessly, for there was nothing else left in all creation. All the other tangible, concrete things had disappeared—had been dissolved, transmuted, changed into brackish water and mud... swamps... mosquitoes... mangroves... mosquitoes.

I dimly realized that I was becoming light-headed. Things began to march in columns of fours. Then ahead I saw a moving spot of white at the base of the point. What was it? I strained my eyes towards the island. Yes, now I knew—it was a canoe. I strapped on the Luger. No, it wasn't a canoe. A sand beach? But there weren't any sand beaches. There was nothing left in the world but swamps. I had it! We were coming into port. Ginger must wake up. Had to get the ship's papers—captain would want to see them. Would he keep us under quarantine... pinolillos? Yes, we'd been quarantined for pinolillos.

Hours later it seemed, the Vagabunda ground her nose on a tiny white shell beach. I stepped out into the shallow water and tried to lift Ginger out of the cockpit, but couldn't make it. She spilled over the side of the canoe and lay down in the water, muttering something about Mareños. I lay down beside her. Splashing water over our faces restored us to consciousness. We looked round. A swamp fringed with mangroves, and a narrow beach of shell, perhaps thirty feet across. Under ordinary circumstances no camper's paradise, but a veritable Eden to us.

We unloaded the canoe, and stacked the equipment on the beach. Ginger rummaged round in the grub box and finally brought out a small package. "I've been saving this for Christmas, but I think we need it now," she said, unwrapping a bar of medicated soap that she had secured in Salina Cruz. We made scrubbing wads of the dry swamp grass that lined the beach, and gave ourselves the most thorough scouring I think either one of us ever had. The soap and friction set the bites to burning until we danced with the torment of them. But what a joy to scrub out those burrowing black devils! The preliminary deticking was done by moonlight. Then we built a big fire and finished the job. The heat of the flames on our tortured skins gave the sensation of scratching. It felt good.

I built another fire higher on the beach, and put the still on. Examining our possessions by firelight, we found everything full of pinolillos except the inside of the tent. While I put that up, Ginger prepared some food. At three o'clock on the morning of December 16, 1935, we sat in the smoke of the fire and enjoyed what I will always believe to be one of Ginger's gastronomic triumphs: black coffee, dried fish, and toasted tortillas.

As in the taleje camp, we slept in relays. I took the first watch, and tired as I was, Ginger kept me alert and busy. I held her hands when she moaned, and tried to scratch, and released them as soon as she quieted down. At daylight she awoke, and guarded me. We alternated until the heat in the tent became unbearable. But it was the only way to avoid the nasty running sores caused by skin abrasions in the tropics.

The mosquitoes were waiting for us as we emerged from the tent. One look and we ran for the water. "Am I glad mosquitoes can't dive!" said Ginger as she rolled round in the shallow lagoon, ducking her head each time a squadron landed on her face. But they could do everything else, I reminded her.

Our shorts were the only clothes we had that were free from ticks, and the mosquitoes were making the most of that circumstance. It occurred to me to take the long-legged jeans and long-sleeved shirts that we had worn on the portage, and submerge them in the lagoon while we ate breakfast. They were black with pinolillos, but I knew a cure for that—we'd drown them. How little, despite a long and close acquaintance, did I know my pinolillos!

Breakfast was an ordeal—and a relay race—as we dashed from the smoke of the fire to the greater

safety of the water. After the meal I hopefully retrieved the clothes. Surely by now they were free from ticks. Not a chance. The ticks were still very much alive. Their immersion seemed to have revived them, and they crawled about energetically looking for a host.

It was the ticks or us. We'd boil them. All the pots and the five-gallon still-cans were filled with water and set over the fire. We scoured the beach looking for wood. The termites had found most of it first, but we burnt it anyway—including the termites.

As the clothes began to boil, we stood in the smoke and with profound satisfaction watched our late tormenters rise to the surface and float in the foam. Then we poured scalding water over everything that was too big to boil. The tent, sleeping bag, boxes, everything that water wouldn't ruin, got a scalding. The canvas deck cockpit were soured—myriads of ticks clung to them, scraped off by the canoe's passage through the brush.

We could hardly wait for the clothes to cool before putting them on. But blue denim didn't mean a thing to those Mexican swamp mosquitoes. They were all equipped with the latest model pneumatic drills. We flew to the shelter of the tent, and stayed there until sundown.

In sober truth it is hard to exaggerate the danger of these tropical insects. The only parallel in the North might be the periodic grasshopper and locust inundations. The reader can readily imagine the result to animals and men, if these insects were carnivorous. There is nothing periodic or intermittent about the insects who live south of the tropic of Cancer. And most of them are flesh-eaters. Far more remarkable to us than Cortez' conquest of the Aztecs, was the ability of Pedro de Alvarado and others to take large bodies of men, unused to the climate and wearing European clothes, long distances through the jungle and swampy lowlands, where not one step can be taken without encountering hordes of these voracious man-killers.

Soon after daybreak of the second day we were loaded up and under way. We had by no means recovered from our bites; and our bodies were stiff and sore, and covered with small running ulcers. It would take days of rest to eliminate the poison and repair the damage of the long, forced march. Eighteen hours on the shell beach had exhausted the firewood—but not mosquitoes. Drugged and weary, we started off to look for some Elysian Field where there was a flowing spring of clear water, food in abundance—and no bugs! This paradise we hoped to find sometime before Christmas—nine days away.

We paddled along the winding channels among the many islands of the estero. The lagoon was the breeding place of countless thousands of wading birds, but the low-lying, swampy island offered no subsistence for other animals. After travelling about six miles, Aguas Pocas opened out into Great Pampa. The water here was also shallow, most of it two feet or less; and in many places the swamp grass was so thick that travelling became difficult. One of us had to perch on the bow and push the mass of grass to one side as it piled up in front of the canoe. A light breeze came up and we hoisted sail, but even with the aid of the wind it was hard to pass through the miniature Sargasso Sea. Finally we became completely entangled.

It was blowing up so we headed for the lee of an island in the distance. The lagoon was so shallow that when small breakers rolled up, we hit bottom. The norther tearing down the pampa lashed it into foam, and the canoe raced directly before the wind. Soon we swung into the lee, where the mangroves let in just enough wind to make good sailing, and the

lee shore gave us smooth water. The island terminated in a shell point. Before us lay the great, wind-swept pampa, the other side of which we could not see. Since it would be suicidal to attempt to cross it in the norther, we decided to make camp on the beach. On the opposite side of it we found the remains of a large Mareño camp, consisting of several crude racks for drying fish and some tumbledown brush shelters. The beach was about twenty feet wide and a hundred feet long, with a swamp at one end and the pampa at the other. We chose a fairly open place on the lee side of the island, hoping to foil the mosquitoes by placing the camp site in the sweep of the wind.

"We're certainly asking for trouble," Ginger said, as we unloaded the canoe. I agreed that the place looked like the old home town of all the Mareños who lived on the lagoon, but at least we could thank them for providing us with firewood. "And only luck to thank for getting us out of that mess in the grass," she commented briefly.

Any one who has never tried setting up camp in a good stiff wind has a treat in store for them. Eventually Ginger built her fire, and I put the tent up. These preliminaries over, we began to think about food. We were as hungry as bears, and anything we could secure with hook, spear, or gun would be the menu for supper. So we paddled to the calmer water on the lee of the island, and started looking about.

I took a position on the bow, with the spear poised, while Ginger managed the boat. The water was muddy, and my only target was a swirl in the water. But before we could fish I had to spear the bait. I pegged at a large swirl and hit, and from the way the spear shaft flew through the water, I had taken a big fellow—perhaps we had our supper. I pulled in the line, grabbed the shaft, and started to lift our catch into the cockpit, but decided against it when I saw the creature impaled on the spear's prongs. It was a large sting ray of a variety new to us. Three wicked looking, bony spines protruded from the mid-section of its slender tail; its round, flat body was black and shiny. In the muddy water of the lagoon, the creature had been invisible.

"Whew! What ugly wounds you'd get from that fellow," said Ginger. "Well, anyway, it's good for bait." We cutoff a portion of its flesh, and paddling out from shore as far as we could without getting into the full force of the norther, dropped the anchor. Here, after a stiff tussle, we landed two large fish, also of a type new to us—possibly catfish. At any rate they were good to eat, and we soon had them sizzling over the fire.

By the time the meal was ready, the wind was so strong that we had to retreat to the shelter of the tent to eat it. During the meal, Ginger asked my plans for the night. "Sleep," I answered, "and plenty of it. We're behind on our schedule." That brought up the question of the possible appearance of the Mareños, and how both of us could sleep at once without scratching the pinolillo bites. There was little likelihood of the Mareños showing up during the norther. As long as the wind blew we were safe. But to make certain that we were not taken by surprise, I would devise an alarm that would waken us instantly if any one approached the tent. The danger of scratching could be eliminated by making "boxing gloves" out of our clothes, and tying them securely round our hands. This last idea amused Ginger immensely; she laughed heartily. "You'll see," I said confidently. "It will work. At least we can't dig in with our fingernails." But like so many bright ideas, it had one fatal and unpredictable flaw—it worked too well!

My Mareño alarm was a minor masterpiece. I entirely encircled the camp with a line, and tied one

end to a slipknot from which were suspended two of Ginger's kettles. Anything coming in contact with the line would drop the kettles close beside my head. Whereupon I would seize my trusty Luger and prepare to meet the foe.

We worked long and diligently at the job of encasing our hands, and were rather proud of our ability to do it without outside aid. The last knot on Ginger's right hand had been tied by using a slipknot and pulling with our teeth.

I went to sleep feeling both virtuous and secure. The two stumbling-blocks to a good night's rest had been settled to my satisfaction. Some time towards morning I awakened to the sound of falling metal, and jumped for my gun. But my gun hand was wrapped up in my shorts. I tried the other hand, but, wrapped in the folds of my shirt, it, too, was useless. "Do something!" I cried to Ginger. "There are Mareños out there, and I've got to use my gun." She motioned towards my bound hands and helplessly waved her own. I began biting at the knot on her right hand—the slipknot that we had so cleverly tied. It loosened a bit. She giggled, as I frantically tugged with my teeth, and finally removed the makeshift glove from her hand. She grabbed her gun, unzipped the tent, and looked out on the moon-bathed camp site. Then she howled with laughter as she reported that the wind had tipped over the still can. My burglar alarm was still intact.

The next morning, coping with the wind taxed our ingenuity. We awoke to a blast that almost carried the tent from its moorings, and crawled out into heavy gusts that would have whipped it to pieces in another hour. We immediately untied the ridge rope and let the tent down, piling logs on it to keep the wind from snatching it from beneath our fingers. The gale increased while we worked. It pelted our faces with spray picked up from the pampa, where black clouds of spume gyrated like small cyclones. How to cook, build a fire, or distil water in the face of a wind that we could hardly stand against was an issue that had to be met. We went to work cutting brush for a windbreak. By noon we had constructed a substantial, three-sided stockade out of brush, and poles salvaged from the Mareño camp. The enclosure was large enough to contain the tent and the fireplace. To build a big enough fire to distil water we dug a hole close to the windbreak, and lined it with mud from the swamp. This served its purpose admirably, and the still can soon whistled.

After lunch we strapped on our guns and started out to see what a swamp looked like. Its beginning was within twenty feet of our camp. Since travelling through it seemed impossible, we skirted a narrow strip of sand to the east, keeping an eye out for game. The wind lashed the mangroves and whipped their branches on our heads and into our faces, so that to travel at all we had to cut through the trees and enter the swamp. Here, hundreds of lagoon birds had taken refuge from the norther that roared overhead. Rather than face its blasts, they almost refused to fly, huddling disconsolately behind any available shelter.

Now well within the confines of the swamp, we stopped and looked about us. It was a strange and curiously fascinating place. The turbid black water, covered with slime and full of rotting vegetation, seemed to belong to some remote geologic age—the earth before the advent of mammals. Mosses and other parasitic growths hung in wraithlike festoons from the dark trees. In the perpetual twilight and hot steaming vapours of the swamp there was a commingling of the elements, as there had been in the beginning.

Continued on page 46

The Gewumpuses Drop in

By H. Murray Campbell

LIKE all residents in Mexico, we are occasionally visited with "tourist trouble" and by this I do not mean that we are afflicted with the species of dysentery to which the same expression is at times applied, but that, when we are least prepared Mr. and Mrs. Gewumpus from Dead Dog Gulch, Colorado, or some such outlandish place, descend upon us.

They are of course provided with an effusive letter of introduction from our dear old friends the Jereks, whom we have not seen or heard of for umpteen years and indeed cannot recall very well, except that it may have been that we once met at the Pyramids, or possibly one evening in 1933 at Al's place just before the joint folded up. Anyway, it seems that the Jereks remember us perfectly, and didn't I used to have red hair? No, I didn't; it must have been two other guys, and does my wife still dance so divinely? And so it goes, and the Gewumpuses are so thrilled with wonderful Mexico and so are their four small children who are outside in the car, as well as Mrs. Gewumpus's mother and two of her friends.

Mr. Gewumpus, who at once begs me to call him Pete, is amazed at the intricacies of the Spanish language. Nothing seems to mean what it says.

"For instance, brother," he complains, "you see written up over a store the word 'Ferretería.' Now, I think to myself, why should anybody open a hardware store just to sell ferrets? Well, I never asked, but animals and galvanized iron buckets don't seem to go together, unless they use the ferrets to demonstrate the rat traps. Do they?"

Well, we get over this stile and then Mrs. Gewumpus (Ella to us) discourses on the immorality to be found everywhere in Mexico, and in public too!

"The stores was closed," Ella begins, "when we drove in, but what did I see plainly written up everywhere but dozens of 'Joyerías' and 'Lecherías.' Now I can understand people having lots of joy, but they should have it at home the same as we do in Colorado. So why advertise it? And as for lechery, we tourists ain't interested in such disgusting things, are we, Pete?"

"No, of course," says Pete, a shade too readily and winking at me as if I could be some sort of an accomplice, but then he brightens up and remarks that he has seen a store or two marked "Nevería," which must be for the old people who never can enjoy it no more.

"And these here dirty old Pacers," says Ella's mother. "We get eight or nine of them for a dollar, but what are they good for? A man on the street tried to sell me a blanket for twenty Pacers and when I offered him two for it, he just said something dirty under his breath—I am sure it was a dirty word—and walked away. The money's just no good, that's what I think."

I agreed that we do not get much for our money nowadays but ventured to say that we have to work just as hard for it as anybody else.

"Work," grumbled Ella's mother, who was evidently a woman of very decided opinions. "Who ever saw anybody work in Mexico?"

I nearly forgot my old Castilian politeness by reminding her that she had been here but a very short time, only Pete jumped into the breach by remarking that of course the gringos sometimes worked at making the lazy Indians work, and that's how all the

gringos got so rich.

We have a small fountain in the yard and just then a large splash told us that young Mary Mae had fallen in to join the goldfish.

What amused my wife was that the whole Gewumpus tribe acted as if it were all our fault, just for having a fountain for Mary Mae specially to fall into. Incidentally, though my wife is usually a hospitable woman she privately said to me when they had gone that she wished that we had had at least six fountains, for pandemonium broke out and it was a moot question as to who was shrieking the loudest, Mary Mae, Ella or Ella's mother. Mr. Gewumpus, Pete, I mean, did not shriek but neither was he silent. He seemed to be talking to God about the goldfish, but we could not hear him well because his young daughter, not a very handsome child and now exceedingly wet, had flown into a tantrum and her small brother and sisters joined in the chorus. So much for Mary Mae; when she subsided she was bundled into a blanket, her clothes hung up to dry and the Gewumpuses stayed to supper.

And then there was the question of Stinky. Who was Stinky? Well, Stinky was a dog, at least he had been born a dog and probably born stinky. I tried to explain that our own pure blooded beast didn't like other dogs in the house and there might be a fight, so that Stinky had better stay in the car outside.

The Gewumpuses didn't like to impose on us, but what could we send out for poor Stinky's supper? Usually he only ate a steak or perhaps a plate of Corn Flakes with milk. What had we? Whatever it was, Ella offered to carry it out and dropped the plate and broke it as she was bringing it back. Wouldn't we let her pay for it? Of course we would, one of these days. Mexico is full of dime stores where they sell plates for dogs. She would send us one of Stinky's just as soon as they got home again. "Thanks very much," says I, well knowing that she would be eating off cast iron dishes in hell before she ever thought of it again.

Somehow or other the evening came to an end and it was time to go back to the Tourist Courts, so we loaded them into the car, Pete and Ella, the four olive branches, ma-in-law, the two friends and Stinky.

"Just a minute," says Pete, "we've got a flat" and sure and to goodness they had, so into the house they all bundle again except Pete and me and then we have to go and see if there is a jack in my car because Pete's won't work. So I get down in the mud and change the wheel whilst Pete stands by and tells me exactly how to do it and then starts to put my jack away in his tool box, sort of absent-mindedly, but I manage to stop him in time and hold it closely until they are all safely packed back in the car.

Well, finally they depart, calling down blessings on our heads as the Good Book says, and we telling them not to forget to give our regards to the good old Jereks and to hurry back to Mexico one of these days again, hoping it would not be any time soon.

"And so to bed with great content," as the good Pepys used to write, leaving all the mess to be cleared up by the criada in the morning and repeating to ourselves the time honored saying "Never Again," which of course we do not believe, for just the same as earthquakes and other calamities, Gewumpuses just keep on happening.



Oil.

By Stefan Hirsch.

Juanito and his Donkey

By Irene Nicholson

IN the desert the cacti, and the silent men wrapped in their sarapes, seemed to say to strangers from gentler lands that beauty and tenderness are frivolous irrelevancies when life is always on the edge of death. Men protected life and cherished it and suddenly threw it away, and prayed to God or the Blessed Virgin, and began again, from the beginning.

Juanito had a little rose climbing over his house, and he used to carry water for it from a feeble spring many miles away.

He had also a donkey: a she-ass that had nourished several young, whom Juanito had sold. Now this ass, Estrella, was growing big again. Juanito hoped she would foal before a certain date in the spring, when there was to be a jaripeo in his uncle's village, many miles off, in a fertile valley, to which Juanito particularly wanted to go.

The valley had flowers, and crops, and many fat animals; for Juanito it represented the future; it meant hope and wealth. He had been there once, some time ago, and had ridden his uncle's horse, and learned to throw a lasso and his uncle had promised that if he could come to this jaripeo he could help to throw the bulls.

So he planned to ride there on Estrella; the foal, if it were big enough, could come along beside. They would all three travel by night, under the stars, moving away from the sand towards the green land.

Juanito dreamed of water and of fields of maize, of riding bravely winding his lasso. And Estrella dreamed the dream of she-donkeys all over the world, a mute dream into whose secret no man could penetrate.

She foaled as Juanito hoped. The rose tree too had kept alive through the driest season. Everything seemed to be going well. They were all three together, the day before the proposed departure on their journey, idling on the dry waste over which buzzards hovered. The main road ran below the hill where Juanito sat, but he planned not to use it for his journey—rather to go straight across the desert. He sat and dreamed of colours non-existent in his homeland—of butterflies and bright birds and green grass. He planned his whole life, following on from this jaripeo; how he would make a brave showing, earn someone's praise, be asked to stay there in the rich pastures to look after some wealthy ranchowner's flock. And so he fell asleep. Tomorrow his journey was to begin, and now he was tired.

Estrella wandered down towards the road; perhaps it was the shining surface that attracted her. Her hoofs rang on the hard asphalt. The foal trotted after her and began to suck. And there they both stood.

Along the road came Pablo in a large truck. He had a small business carrying the peasants' wares up

to the town to sell. He had been a village boy, but had improved himself, that is to say, he now wore an American-cut jacket, shoes of good stout leather, and a shirt and tie. He whistled as he drove, the newest song hit, thinking that when he reached the city and had done his work he would find that pretty girl he'd met last time, and dance. She had felt so soft when he squeezed her goodbye.

She had only been coquetting when she refused him what he wanted. This time she'd give in. Besides, he was making money fast. He could buy from the peasants so cheaply, and sell at fancy prices to the American tourists. So he might buy the girl a little pearl necklace, perhaps. He wouldn't marry her, however. If he were to belong to the coming Mexico, he must find a girl of good family. And he was the coming Mexico. Look how he'd risen!

How silly of the peasants to let their donkeys stray onto the road. The road was for cars. He did not draw up—well, just the slightest fraction, to ease his conscience. The foal, light and nimble on his feet, managed to get out of the way, just bumping the near mudguard. But Estrella, weak from undernourishment and from bearing her offspring, fell in front of the car.

At that moment Juanito woke. He took in the scene at once. But surely the car would stop! He wanted to shout, but his throat was dry. Then it became clear that the car was going on, that the driver saw everything, and heeded nothing. Pablo could see Estrella's bony knees struggling upward and falling back against the asphalt. Everything seemed to go in slow motion. Very, slowly the car's shock-absorber caught Estrella's grey flank and rolled her over. Very slowly the body somersaulted under the car, the legs stiffened, and the car drove on.

At the side of the road Juanito and the little foal watched the warm blood ooze from Estrella's ears and nostrils. For a long time they looked at the corpse, and then Juanito patted the foal, and, holding him lightly by the mane, led him slowly home.

All the way Juanito felt terribly sad. Life was a process of long, slow building up; of searching for water and food, struggling against disease. And so

suddenly as this it could go. Juanito had forgotten the jaripeo entirely; it was only the old donkey, Estrella, whom he thought of.

Then he remembered that the foal must somehow be fed. He went to the village shop and bought a little bottle. Then he got some milk, and made the foal drink. It sucked at the mouth of the bottle, reluctantly at first, but later quite happily because of Juanito's encouragement. Owing to the sweet warmth of the sun and of the little donkey's body, and the sweet smell that came from the milk, unexpectedly everything seemed tender and gentle and full of promise. "If he had not slept... If the driver had not been so cruel... If the donkey had wandered another way..." all these thoughts meant nothing, for all was as it must be. His duty now was to care for the little baby donkey, whom he would call Consuelo, because it was there when old Estrella had gone.

When he had fed the foal he brushed the fluffy coat, almost as woolly as a lamb's. He spent a long time over the task, in order to occupy himself and because he felt it was a way to comfort the little motherless creature. Then he led it to the shed where the two donkeys had always slept. Passing round the corner of the house, they came together to Juanito's rose tree. The foal put out its furry nose and sniffed, and the scent of the rose was like incense. Its colour like blood.

Deep peace filled Juanito. Wherever you were, as long as you lived you were all right. If you were all right. If you did not live when there was blood in you, one day you would have no power to live at all. Man must struggle; only God could dispose. Did not the little Padre Ricardito say so?

* * *

As for Pablo—he never gave the dead donkey a thought. He sold his wares, made a good profit but worried thinking he might have made more, quarrelled with the girl, got drunk, and then lay wakefully in bed wondering how to get more and still more money.

Hopi Indian Dance

By M. S. Scheuer

THE Indians are dancing now
In summer twilight, soft and deep.
The canyon stretches far below
Where lilac shadows sleep.

They dance to drum-beat's urgent sound
In age-old rhythms that they know—
The rhythms of the rain and wind,
The whirling sleet and snow.

Mexico Initiates a New Code for Infantile Protection

By Gerald Thornby

THE sad plight of homeless or unprotected children in the City of Mexico has aroused the concern of Lic. Fernando Casas Alemán ever since he assumed the direction of the municipal government—the Department of the Federal District—more than three years ago. It was due to his initiative that new institutions, supported by public charity and the state, and serving the aim to alleviate the conditions of underprivileged children, have been created in this city; though at best they provide but a partial solution of this very serious social problem.

After carrying out extensive studies of this problem, Lic. Casas Alemán presented his conclusions and recommendations in the form of a code for infantile protection to the members of the City Council, by whom it was approved, and subsequently before the delegates of the Pan-American Congress of Pediatrics which assembled in this city five months ago. This congress also approved the proposed code, with a resolution that similar codes would be presented by the delegates in their respective countries.

Since the purpose of Lic. Casas Alemán is to adapt this code as a statute in the Federal District, so that it may eventually serve as an example for other municipalities or become a federal law, he has taken necessary steps to formulate a comprehensive project that would answer specific local needs and be constitutionally valid. And since the project covers various distinct aspects, special commissions have been appointed by his office to make thorough studies of each of them, so that they may be ultimately coordinated into an integral plan.

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These commissions, chosen of qualified specialists in their respective fields, are entrusted with the studies and formulation of conclusions regarding the following phases of the general theme: eugenics, civil legislation, child labor, juvenile delinquency, pedagogy, spectacles, press, constitutional points.

Figuring as a central body of this concerted effort is the Commission of Civil Legislation, composed of such prominent members of the legal profession as: Luis Araujo Valdivia, acting as President; José Castillo Larrañaga, as Vice-President; Javier San Martín, as Secretary; Leopoldo Aguilar, Alberto Mijangos, Rodolfo Brito Foucher and Ricardo Castillo Duran, as voters.

The Commission for the Study of Juvenile Legislation is presided over by Lic. José Angel Ceniceros, with Lic. Juan José González Bustamante occupying the vice-presidency. The studies of this commission comprise the fundamental points of juvenile social aid and juridical protection.

The Coordinating Commission is composed of the Presidents of each respective commission. Lic. Fernando Casas Alemán is its President; Lic. José Candano, Delegate President, and Lic. Luis Araujo Valdivia, General Secretary.



Lic. Fernando Casas Alemán, Chief of the Department of the Federal District, and author of the basic points for the new Code of Infantile Protection.

The conclusions brought forth by each of the commissions are of such far-reaching significance that their legal application virtually necessitates a revision of nearly all the existant statutes. In their final purport these conclusions pursue the common aim to provide utmost protection to the child by strengthening the institution of the home and family, which are the basis of organized society.

The proposed Code of Infantile Protection covers the problem entirely, from the pre-natal stage on. In this respect, the thesis sustained by the Commission of Paedology is that every child born in National territory has the right to descend from healthy and responsible parents, to enjoy a sound and stable family environment and to be protected from hereditary ailments. It fixes as the duty of every man and woman to consciously contribute toward the general improvement of the national offspring by contracting marriage upon eugenic and legal premises. It renders the parents responsible for the health of their children.

The outstanding reforms proposed by the new code deal with a drastic revision in the legal and moral concept of paternal authority, which departs from the concept of Patria Potestas to the extent that it regards its function as being primarily for the benefit of the children. In other words, in the new concept paternal authority is considered to be a duty, which cannot be exercised when it becomes detrimental to the physical or moral development of the child.

Another significant point in the code proposes, as the means of moral and social protection of children, the abolition of such designations as "legitimate," "natural," "adulterous" or "incestuous." The law will solely classify children as having been born in or out of wedlock.

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On the other hand, the salient point stressed by the Commission of Civil Legislation deals with the need of protecting the institution of marriage by rest-

riking the granting of divorces only to such cases where it is absolutely justified and necessary. The proposed statute provides for a provisional or test divorce for a period of six months, at the end of which it is either annulled or a final decree is granted. It is stipulated that, to the obvious benefit of the children, such a test period will in frequent cases result in a reconciliation.

The code also accepts as the state's obligation to impart special attention and schooling to maimed or abnormal children and to provide support for those who are homeless or abandoned. Moreover, juvenile delinquents must be regarded as being the victims of a defective society and therefore must be judged upon a humane criterion which emphasizes re-education rather than punishment.



Lic. José Angel Ceniceros, President of the Commission of Juvenile Legislation.



Lic. Juan José González Bustamante, Vice-President of the Commission of Juvenile Legislation.



Lic. José Candano, Delegate President of the Commission.

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The enthusiastic effort lent to this task by each of the appointed commissions is attested in the fact that each has already presented its conclusions to the Coordinating Commission. It is therefore expected that the projected code will be submitted to the consideration of the House of Congress during its forthcoming session which begins on the 1st. day of next September.

In providing a much wider range of legal and moral protection for its underprivileged children, Mexico, setting a splendid example for other countries, is basically protecting its entire social organism; for it cannot be denied that social mal-adjustment in adults is almost invariably the result of a wrong environment in childhood.



Lic. Luis Araujo Valdivia, President of the Commission of Civil Legislation.

Patterns of an Old City

MEMO'S NEW MAMA

By Howard S. Phillips

THE long and narrow court which extended between the two three-storied walls of the tenement building and came to a dead end at a third wall in the rear bore the designation of a "privada," though privacy was indeed the very least of the privileges enjoyed by the tenants. A begrudged familiarity of crowded space—of thin divulging walls and telltale windows, of tight and huddled stairs and hallways and of the unpartitioned roofs which served as a communal laundry, as an improvised playground and after-dark tryst—prevailed in the neighborhood, occasionally degenerating into open feuds, but mostly suffered with guarded resentment, with a sense of mutual tolerance, as an unavoidable burden.

Occupying a site in one of the erstwhile elegant streets of Colonia Roma, the "privada," built fifty years ago and originally defining the utmost in modernity, had eventually declined to the status of a somewhat superior type of a vecindad dwelling, housing a congeries of tenants of sundry trivial callings and modest means—minor employees, petty shopkeepers, garage mechanics—who were in all barely a step above the folk who in the less pretentious sections of the city inhabit the cubby-holes of lowly vecindades.

Poverty, however, does not always signify an absence of pride, and proud folk prefer to conceal their wants and defects from intrusive eyes. Thus, in the crowded confines of the "privada," excepting the precarious isle comprised of the few older residents whose oldfashioned amiability had withstood the test of years, indifference or hostile seclusion was the sole means of escaping the contempt familiarity breeds. This isle alone steadfastly defied the innate instability of the place—the frequent shifting of the tenants, the constant coming and going of unknown and unsettled folk for whom the "privada" was merely a stop along a mysterious itinerary, and who seemed to be in perpetual trouble with the exacting conserje over the problem of paying their rent on time.

Only among the children, shielded by the sweet delusion that nothing in life is ugly, there was a sense of genuine neighborhood.

* * *

Memo and Bibi became friends not only because they were schoolmates and neighbors, nor because they were both devoted collectors of postage stamps, but mainly because each intuitively felt that their lives, distinct as they were, had in some ways a great deal in common.

Memo had a father and mother, while Bibi, having been an orphan since infancy, lived with his grandmother. Bibi was never actually envious of other children because they had fathers and mothers; for children, save probably some playthings they might crave, are seldom conscious of the things they lack. They accept reality with rational conformance. Their longings, being visions of daydreams, are usually directed at quite unattainable goals.

Besides, Bibi was vaguely aware that having a father and mother did not always signify an advantage, that sometimes it strangely complicated existence and even made one unhappy. He did not know exactly what his grandmother meant when upon occasions, as

absentmindedly she murmured to herself, he heard her say that it was a "lastima," a pity, that such a nice boy would be so unlucky as to have such useless parents. He did not quite understand the meaning of the term "padres tan inútiles," but he had surmised from what Memo had told him that it probably had something to do with the fact that his father, being employed as paymaster on highway constructions, had to be away from home most of the time, and that maybe it was due to this reason that his mother was usually ill-humoured and had swollen eyelids from crying and nearly every day went somewhere with a man who had the radio repair shop around the corner.

Strange things often happened inside the "privada," which Bibi did not strive to comprehend. These things belonged to the world of grownups. And yet he sought to understand why grownups on occasion acted like children. Memo lived in the flat directly across the court, and some times when his father came home Bibi and his grandmother were disturbed in the night by an uproar of brawling. Fearfully he heard the angry shouting of Memo's father and his mother's screeching retorts and her sudden anguished outcries as if she were being beaten. And as Bibi listened in apprehension the thought would pass through his mind that it was absurd for Memo's parents to be conducting themselves like small boys.

One night, during one of those brawls, Memo came running to their flat. When they opened the door to his pounding, weeping bitterly he implored them to rescue his mother for he was sure that his father was intent on murdering her. But Bibi felt powerless to help his friend, while his grandmother, sitting in her thick nightgown on the edge of the bed, did nothing beside murmuring something that it was a "verdadera desgracia" and that someone should really call a gendarme. Then, finally, as the noise across the court subsided, she gathered Memo in her arms and holding his head over her withered breast petted him gently with her bony hand till he stopped sobbing.

* * *

Each morning, bound for school, the boys summoned each other with a special kind of whistle and met in the court. But on that morning Memo did not respond to Bibi's repeated whistling, and he walked to the school alone. He recalled that Memo's father and mother had been brawling again during the night and that Bibi often missed school on the following days.

That afternoon, when Memo told him that his mother had gone away with the radio man and that now his father would have to stay in town, and probably lose his job on the highways, for there was no one else to take care of the flat or to look after him, it all seemed quite stupid and senseless to Bibi. Besides, he felt annoyed with Memo because he was crying again, which might have been all right for a girl but was quite shameful and wrong for a boy of thirteen. Still, without fully comprehending his friend's plight, beneath his disgust he felt sorry for him and wishing to console him made him a present of a batch of duplicate stamps.

Memo's father did not, however, remain in the city. Before a week was up he hired an elderly ser-

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Wayside Notes

By Wallace Gillpatrick

A DELIGHTFUL part of Mexico is the suddenness with which fiestas drop down on you. I say "drop down" advisedly. A fiesta once dropped down on me and nearly extinguished me. It began on Friday and lasted over until Monday. I had not the faintest premonition that this fiesta was coming. On Thursday, I had wasted all my substance on sundry antiquities which a designing person brought me: idols, swords and the like. Friday morning, at earliest banking hours, I sallied forth to put myself in funds. The bank was closed till Monday. I had the munificent sum of thirty-five cents in my pocket, and as my only available friend at that time happened to be one who had frequently expressed his aversion to borrowing and being borrowed of, I passed three awful days. I determined not to expend one single centavo needlessly, and it was nothing short of tragedy to see those thirty-five constituents of a forlorn hope slowly but surely fading away. If you want to know what it really is to be "out in this cold world," try living three days on thirty-five cents. You can get the feeling even in Mexico. Of course I might have pawned my purchases, but it never occurred to me I had an "uncle" in Mexico.

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A fiesta dropped down just as unexpectedly while I was in Guadalajara but luckily I had more than thirty-five cents in the pocket. I first realized the season, when I found the portales crowded, and the little notion stands converted into confectioners' shops, with every sort of symbol displayed in sugar.

After all, the distinguishing traits of Mexico's various cities and their peoples are in outward and really unimportant details. The same unwritten laws govern society in all parts alike. It is an odd fact that many rules of etiquette in the neighbor-republics are diametrically opposite; and I believe few of us, either Mexicans or Americans, realize this until one visits the country of the other. In the north a family who may be newcomers in a city or locality, wait to receive the visits of those who care to know them. In Mexico, they must at once send "at home" cards to all whom they care to know. It would be the greatest temerity, on the part of the northern man, to take the initiative in saluting a lady, with whom he had slight acquaintance. Here it is the very thing he must do. Nor is this all. A stranger in a Mexican city must bow first on meeting each and every gentleman to whom he has been presented; and if he would avoid breaches of etiquette, he must be literally lynx-eyed; for his new acquaintances will make little or no sign of recognition. They regard him with their usual well-bred composure; it remains for him to do the rest. I realized all this once while strolling with some acquaintances on a much-frequented promenade. The place was crowded and the light was that trying mixture of twilight and electricity, broken by patches of absolute darkness. It dawned upon me that I was in a delicate position. People I had met but once would not bow to me first nor could I recognize them in that light! Ladies especially look so differently at different times, owing to a change in costume. I wondered which was worse, to bow to people I didn't know or to fail to bow to those I did. The realization that I had perhaps been guilty

of many omissions was annoying, and I begged my companion to sit down for a while, feeling that safety lay in inaction. But there was one girl who felt sorry for the gringo. Anyway she bowed, with a dignified yet gracious bend of the head and that bow more than atoned for all.

* * *

One more episode that is too good be lost. I went into a shop one day and was served by the owner in person, a comely dame, "fat, fair and forty." After a few trivial remarks regarding the article I was buying, she proceeded to subject me to a rigid and searching cross-examination. Was I French, German or English and how long had I been in the country? Had I come for business or pleasure and when was I going home? Was I married or single? Had I left a novia (sweetheart) in Mexico City? Ah ha! It was plain that I had and that I was buying a gift to send to her! This I stoutly denied and said that on the contrary I was in search of a novia; at the same time casting ardent glances at my fair inquisitor. I might as well have languished at a stone image. Her curiosity was wholly impersonal and disinterested. She wanted to know because she wanted to know, and having satisfied herself, she took my money and said, "que le vaya Ud. bien!" (May you go well!) as unfeeling as though she had not just received the sacred confidences of my inmost soul.

Water Color.

By Ruth Van Sickle Ford.





Water Color.

By Roberto de la Cueva.

The Braceros

By Nathan L. Whetten

MIGRATION of Mexican farm workers to the United States has provided an outlet for surplus Mexican workers at various times. Manuel Gamio, writing in 1935, estimated that since 1910 about one million workers from Mexico had gone to the United States and then had returned later. Most of them were motivated to leave Mexico because of the economic distress prevailing in their local communities. They usually found employment in the United States and sent money back to their families in the distressed areas from which they came. Gamio estimates, through the study of postal money orders, that at least 10,000,000 pesos a year were saved by these workers.

With the curtailment of employment during the depression years of the 1930's emigration of Mexicans to the United States practically ceased, and there was a large reverse migration back to Mexico of Mexican who had been living and working in the United States. World War II created a manpower shortage of farm workers in the United States, and an international agreement was made which authorized the United States government to recruit farm workers in Mexico under regulations imposed by the Mexican government. Some of these conditions and procedures were described by R. C. Jones, of the Pan-American Union, as follows:

"Since it was impossible to determine at the time the Agreement was made exactly what number workers would be needed at various times, the Mexican Government is advised from time to time as to the number of workers wanted and it then determines the number that can be permitted to leave and from what

areas they may be drawn. Workers, for example, can only be recruited from certain designated states and areas in Mexico and at such times when it is felt that it would not be detrimental to the Mexican economy. Recruitment in the northern states has been subject to special restriction because there seemed to be a tendency for workers to be drained off in large numbers. At the original Agreement Mexico set ceiling of 50,000 on the number of workers who could be brought into the United States at one time. This number was raised to 75,000 in 1944. The War Food Administration set a tentative schedule according to which these men were to be recruited and transported. Changes in these schedules have at times been found to be necessary or desirable, as was the case in June, 1944, when a much larger number of men was needed in the beet fields than it had been originally planned to send. The number actually under contract, however, has never equalled the ceiling.

The recruitment phase of the program has proven to be particularly difficult. Although there is a rough selection of men in their home communities there was a tendency for large numbers to congregate in Mexico City in the expectation of being contracted. Charges have been made in the Mexican press that the sale of certificates of eligibility had developed into a sizable black market and early in 1945 three national deputies and a number of government employees were indicated for being involved in such practices."

The farm-labor recruiting program in Mexico began in 1942, and, by the end of 1944, 118,471 workers had been brought to the United States—4,293 came in 1942, 52,098 in 1943, and 62,170 in 1944.

During the time that farm laborers were being recruited, workers were also being drawn from Mexico to work on the railroads. Up to the end of December, 1944, a total of 80,137 Mexican nationals had been delivered to employers for railroad work in the United States. This makes a total of 198,744 workers who left the villages, the ejidatarios, and the cities of Mexico during the period 1922-44 to work in the United States. They came mostly from the central region. The available data refers only to the states from which they were recruited and the states to which they returned. These may or may not coincide with the states of permanent residence. The data cover only the period from September 1, 1942, to May 31, 1944. The vast majority (84.1 per cent) were recruited from the Central region. The Distrito Federal furnished 31.6 per cent, but, since the Distrito Federal was the chief recruiting center, it seems likely that many who were listed from there actually lived in other states; the state of Michoacán furnished 24.8 per cent; Guanajuato, 14.4 per cent; and Jalisco, 6.0 per cent. The governors of these three states protested at various times that agriculture in their states was being seriously disrupted because of the migration of workers of the United States. Complaints were made by other local officials in various districts of Guanajuato, Michoacán, and Jalisco to the effect that many ejidatarios abandoned their lands to become braceros ("farm hands"). Migration to the United States from these three states is not new. Mexican immigrants to the United States studied by Manuel Gamio in 1926 came mostly from Guanajuato, Michoacán, and Jalisco. Ralph L. Beals concluded in a recent study of the Tarascan Indian Village of Cherán in the state of Michoacán that:

"Knowledge of emigration is necessary to understand the Cherán population situation. Virtually all the emigration has been to the United States; relatively few persons appear to have emigrated either to other parts of Mexico or to other Tarascan towns. Impressionistically, it would appear that a very considerable portion of Cherán population has been in the United States. Probably very few families either have not been in the United States or do not have some fairly close relative who is or has been in this country. Too small a sample was taken for statistical data on this point to be valid, but of 38 males interviewed specifically with reference to emigration, 25 had been in the United States."

The Mexican Government officially encouraged the farm-labor program despite any adverse effects which it might have on Mexican agriculture. It was viewed as an important contribution which Mexico could make to the war effort; it was believed that the program would also serve as an educational experience for Mexican workers. It was considered a splendid opportunity for isolated workers to leave their small subsistence farms for a few months and to travel into another country, where a more highly developed agriculture prevailed, in order to observe how other people work and live. It was believed that such experience would be of value to them when they returned to their own communities. Some of the advantages acquired by migrants to the United States prior to 1935 are described by Gamio as follows:

"Such persons, who usually emigrated because of the unbearable economic conditions prevailing in their native region, are mainly of Indian or mixed Indian race and their mental and material standard of living before leaving Mexico belonged to a low cultural level. During their stay in the United States almost all of them improved their economic situation and became accustomed to eating better food, living in cleaner and more comfortable rooms, and wearing clothes more suitable to bodily needs than those they used to wear.

Another achievement consisted in their learning to perform all types of agricultural and industrial work in accordance with more modern and efficient practices, so that in comparison with the workers who have not left Mexico and who employ backward methods, these repatriated Mexicans may be justly considered as specialists or masters in their trade, especially since the stupid or lazy were eliminated."

Finally, it should be mentioned that the farm-labor program brought much needed cash into the isolated rural communities of Mexico. The workers earned much more than ever before, and many of them sent home monthly checks of considerable size. By the end of 1944 farm workers in this program had been paid \$75,000,000 and railroad workers, \$63,000,000. The two groups together had earned \$138,000,000.

The farm-labor recruiting program was obviously temporary in nature and terminated at the cessation of hostilities of World War II. The problem of reabsorbing the returning migrants into Mexico's rural economy then presented itself. Many of them acquired new habits of diet and dress and new ideas concerning agriculture. Some are restless and reluctant to settle down again in the same isolated villages from which they migrated, and some of these are moving into Mexico City. The government is settling some of the returning families in new colonies on lands that have recently been developed. A modern colony was established for repatriated Mexicans several years ago in the vicinity of Matamoros in the state of Tamaulipas. This colony appears to be rather successful and has the advantage of permitting people who have had similar experiences to live near one another so that they continue to practice their newly acquired ways of living. Gamio's studies seem to show that when returning migrants are dispersed among the general rural population they become discouraged because of the pressure exerted on them by their neighbors to conform to the old ways of living. He says that frequently they either abandon their acquired techniques and revert to the old customs or they migrate to the cities. He feels that if they are settled in agricultural colonies they will retain the benefit of their experiences abroad and that these colonies will serve as demonstration projects for the surrounding communities.

The extent which migration to the United States will serve in the future as a permanent outlet for the surplus rural population of Mexico, as it has in the past, will, of course, depend upon the demand for such workers in the United States. A prolonged economic depression would shut off almost completely the entrance of Mexican workers.

The Barrancas

By Harry Carr



Oil.

By Margarita C. de Wehmann.

IF YOU can imagine what it would be like, trying to drive a car down Bright Angel Trail and across Grand Cañon, you may get an idea what it was like when our engineers forced two small automobiles through the Barrancas.

This is one of the greatest gulches in the world. It is a giant gash in the heart of the high mountains near the border of Nayarit and the State of Jalisco. Until an American railroad company built a track hugging the face of the mountains that tower above the Barrancas, Guadalajara, the second city of Mexico, was a city cut off—marooned. Either you mounted a mule and plodded over mountains through a district at that time infested by bandits, or you made an enormous circuit by sea. The Southern Pacific Railroad tackled the terrific job of laying rails that encircled the rim of the great chasm. It is said to be the most difficult and expensive stretch of railroad construction in the Western Hemisphere—perhaps in the whole world. And it is also one of the most amazing and beautiful train rides in the world. But it did not help motor traffic in any way. The problem of our party of engineers was to blaze a trail for automobiles.

Back in the days of the Conquest, the Spaniards built a road through the Barrancas: the San Blas to Vera Cruz treasure-road down over the brink of the big cañon and crawled up the other side. With the passing of time, this road had gone to ruin. Whole sections of it had pitched down over the edge of precipices. What remained of it was cut into cañons. It was an impediment rather than a passage. There were places where a burro had to be packed very lightly, to stumble and crawl over. The nature of the ground may be assumed from the fact that one section of the Barrancas bears the appropriate name—Salsipuedes (get out if you can).

We sent two of the five cars back to Ixtlan to be shipped by flatcar to Magdalena on the side of the Cañon. The remaining two cars which were to make the trip were stripped of their baggage load.

A soldier had been sent ahead to arrange for ox-teams. A troop of cavalry rode behind to supply the manpower.

The cars were scarcely outside of our roadside camp when the trail pitched down over the brink. It will always remain one of the epics of automobile driving. But it is not interesting to tell about. There were places where the cars had to hug burro trails on the perilous faces of mountain cliffs, the wheels held on the edge by ropes and soldiers. There were places where they had to go up hills that were like climbing the side of a sky-scraper. It was a matter of backing up for a start, then a mad plunge of a few feet in low gear, then another start. There were places where six oxen pulled with all their might and main ahead, a troop of dismounted cavalry pushed from behind, while the engine roared and screamed. It is a tribute to modern automobile makers that not even a tire was punctured during this terrific ordeal.

At the bottom of the cañon is a lonely, desolate little Mexican town whose inhabitants would no doubt die of homesickness were they removed to a spot more favored. The gentleman who wrote 'Home, Sweet Home,' touched a mysterious phase of human character. At the end of the Apache wars, Geronimo and his renegade warriors were sent as prisoners to the most beautiful part of Florida. They yielded to the inevitable in the matter of losing their freedom, but some of them literally died of longing for the God-awful desolation of the burning Arizona deserts. One Apache chief explained the loneliness of his heart by saying 'I can't look anywhere except up if I wish to see anything,' I don't know how the folks in Blandabarrancas explain their attachment.

From one brink to the other, the automobiles fought their way twenty-eight miles over a motor Purgatory. Having shipped myself with the cars from Ixtlan, I found them resting on cots in a wretched

little hotel in the town of Magdalena. It is a tradition that the hero who came through Pickett's charge at Gettysburg usually shoots his arm off with a Fourth-of-July firecracker. Just so the only damage to any of our cars was in taking one of them off the flatcars during the unloading.

Magdalena was interesting, but did not tempt us to linger. There is a tradition that the mysterious hidden gold mine of the Aztec Emperor Montezuma was near Magdalena. More recent and more cold-blooded investigations of the stories of the Spanish Conquest bring a note of skepticism to these treasure tales. They considerably reduce Montezuma's financial rating in Bradstreet's. Historians are beginning to wonder if the Aztecs had much gold. Their interest seems to have turned to other minerals—obsidian, turquoise.

An ancient letter from a soldier of the Conquest has been found. In telling the news to the folks back home, he says that, when Cortez had to retreat from the city of Tenochtitlan (the present Mexico City), an order gave the soldiers the usual privileges of a forced retreat—the privilege of looting. They could carry off all the gold they could find. He writes with sardonic bitterness that he wishes he had stayed at home in Spain and herded goats. Whether or not Montezuma got his gold from Magdalena, the fact remains that others have found gold there. Rich and important mines have been, and are being worked by American and British interests.

What interested me in Magdalena was the old church. It has a marvelous crucifix—a life-size figure of Christ that is reputed to shed real blood at certain significant periods. A book might be written of some of the sacred figures found in Mexican churches. The artists of that period were nothing if not literal. The figure of the cross is not conventionalized as in our modern artistry. Most of them depict the last episode of a human being dying in awful agony. It calls out the sympathy of the simple, warm-hearted little peons—to them the Christ is their intimate friend. The day we visited the old church, a little Mexican boy of perhaps ten years was clinging to the blood-stained, worn, fragile hand of the Christ, kissing the hand again and again, murmuring caressing, loving words of sympathy and consolation.

I found a volunteer guide in a smart Syrian from Beyrout. He was clever, illuminating, and brazen. The Syrians are all over Mexico. They are sharp traders, the money pioneers. This one told me shamelessly how he had captured the trade of the town from the Mexican merchants. He said the gag was to pretend great friendship—to play on the hearts of the peasants. 'I tell Mrs. Lopez,' he said, 'that the fellow across the way would charge her more: but to show her how warm my heart is for the people of Mexico, I am going to let her have her corn meal and pink dresses very cheap.'

Although this may be effective in the homeland, the Mexican is disillusioned by the time he gets to the United States. The patent-medicine shows of Arizona find the Mexican suckers hard-boiled and wary. My friend Slim Sheets, who sells the world's most marvelous corn cure between acts of the most wonderful vaudeville show on earth, tells me that a Mexican will never buy anything until after the third day. He waits to observe the experience of some Gringo friend before he is prepared to believe that an ointment rubbed on the outside of a shoe will cure the corn inside.

My Syrian friend said that another factor of his success lay in introducing into Magdalena the dollar-down-dollar-a-week system. Like every other transplanted Gringo whom I consulted, he said that the Mexican peon was good pay—a square shooter and commercially honorable.

We drove out late that afternoon through narrow little streets where the women sat in doorways nursing babies. We were in the mescal country now—hills covered with the fat-leaved maguey century plants that yield Mexico's national liquor. A Mexican maguey hacendado has a long wait ahead. Several years must elapse before the crop is ready to 'pick'—and then it is not picked. Mescal is made by cooking and fermenting the root which grows almost to the thickness of a man's body; the result is a yellowish-white liquid very intoxicating and of indescribable taste. Tequila is a refinement of Mescal.

We stopped that night in what had been a lovely old experience. It was more suggestive of a Pompeian villa than a Mexican house—great rooms looking out on loggias, patios following patios. The bedchambers were not alluring. The mattresses were of board. I drew a room with two engineers. At bedtime, one remarked with heavy sarcasm: 'We leave to you the choice. Do you prefer the oak bed or the spruce?' We were warned not to step around in the dark on account of scorpions.

In the midst of misery, we found light. At breakfast next morning, we discovered ourselves sitting seat-mate to one of the most interesting men in Mexico, a tiny, sprightly old man with long whiskers. It was Dr. Atl, the greatest expert in the world on Mexican churches. He was written a work in six volumes which is recognized as the last word. I thought it was strange that there should still be one in Mexico with a name so essentially Aztec. Then I learned that his private name is quite different. He comes from an old Spanish family. His heart from childhood was ever with the vanished Aztecs. Also it was an unfilled desire of his heart to be a Doctor. Whereupon, returning from a long sea voyage, he announced to an astonished world that from that point on he was to be known as Dr. Atl, and from that point on began the real achievements of his life. He is also an artist, a painter of international fame, and a chemist of high repute.

The idea anyone could write six huge volume on the churches of Mexico so staggered me that I felt drawn into the impertinence of expressing my wonderment. 'But, after all,' I hastened to and apologetically, 'it must be a great satisfaction to realize that you have absolutely exhausted a subject.'

Dr. Atl looked as though he were going to faint with astonishment. 'Exhausted the subject!' he gasped. 'My dear fellow, I haven't even seen one third of the churches of Mexico.'

He told us much that was interesting as we ate breakfast, facts that were of value to travelers coming into one of the great centers of New World architecture—Guadalajara. What seem to us now as Old-World architecture—buildings that whisper of ancient days—were the product of an outburst of a glorious period when Youth found an outlet.

The myriad cathedrals and churches of Mexico represent a golden age of young untrammelled architecture. Working under the masters of architecture in Europe, there were a great number of young artists who champed at the bit. As with many brilliant boys bending over drawingboards of today, they had to do what they were told. The Spanish Conquest—the opening of a new heathen, churchless land to the cross and the throne—was their opportunity. Their artistic handcuffs suddenly knocked off, they could work out their own ideas. Never in the history of the world was there such an area of church building. In a period of about one hundred years, more than fifteen thousand important churches were built. An average of more than three a week! Not many of these stand as they were made. Many have been re-

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Portrait. Oil.

By Jesus Guerrero Galván.

Seven Modern Mexican Painters

By Guillermo Rivas

A MONTH ago, commenting in this space on the evolution of Mexican painting during the foregone twenty-five years, I pointed out that although the revival in our midst of mural art and of the true fresco medium signified the most important aesthetic development on this continent, it brought forth in its wake a negative aftermath of stereotyped imitativeness and standardization from which the subsequent generation of Mexican painters has been striving to free itself ever since.

Broadly adhering to the basic principle evolved by the founders of the mural expression—that of rejecting as far as it is possible all foreign influence and seeking inspiration from authentically native sources—our younger painters have been primarily seeking an independent and personal utterance. They can still be grouped under a common designation only as regards their adherence to this principle; beyond that point each pursues his own individual

goal; each is fundamentally seeking inside himself the solution of his creative problems. The "Mexicanism" revealed in their work does not spring from an obeisance to a cult; it is the logical and spontaneous consequence of their environment and birth, and not of a conscious purpose.

Widely heterogeneous in individual form, the "Mexicanism" defined in the art of our outstanding contemporary painters is, moreover, characterized by a common dedication to the fundamental premises of good craft, and by a prevalent note of lyrical realism. Plastic values have not been sacrificed in the aim of recondite abstractionism. The subjective qualities of our modern art are implicit in an objective terminology. Our painters, by and large, are still primarily bent on creating good pictures that voice their message in intelligible terms.

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Eclipse, Oil.

By Guillermo Mesa.

The current exhibit at the Galeria de Arte Moderno clearly illustrates the foregone observation. Comprising the newer works of seven distinguished Mexican painters, who in aggregate may be accepted as being truly representative of the post-mural generation, this exhibit demonstrates to a very impressive degree the extent of individual assertion which characterizes our art today. This exhibit, though unmistakably Mexican as a whole, defines the personal expressions of seven completely mature artistic personalities.

In the work of each there is, furthermore, a palpable striving not only to achieve individuality but also to avoid the pitfalls of a fixed manner, of a "self-imitation," or a narrow repetitiousness either in brush, in palette or in theme.

This urge for mutation is especially evident in the five paintings by Raúl Anguiano. In each of these, it seems as if he endeavoured to test some new inner resource, to further enrich his already opulent technique and phraseology. With an elegantly designed and smoothly brushed portrait in the center of the wall-space assigned to him Anguiano presents several temperas painted from impressions gathered along journeys to Chiapas and Oaxaca. The portrait, preeminently an excellent picture, is a good professional job. The temperas, depicting lush tropical regions, are beautifully composed brush drawings vibrant with sonorous feeling.

Building his volumes in a manner resembling sculptured stone and employing a palette of somber ochres and greys, Jorge Gonzalez Camarena achieves



"Pulque". Oil.

By Francisco Rodriguez Caracalla.

over canvases of average size strange images of monumental proportions. His self-exploring zeal is manifest in compositions that bear a suggestion of anatomical dissections.

In these his newest works Manuel Gonzalez Serrano almost entirely abandons the surrealistic minutiae which figured in his earlier paintings and composes in terms of lyrical naturalism. His paintings, particularly his landscapes, acquire singularity for their technical excellence, for their undertone of symbol and poetry, for their incisive linear structure and vibrantly articulate color.

The salient quality of charm marks the three canvases by Jesús Guerrero Galván which are included in this exposition. A highly sensitive colorist, he achieves an utmost expressiveness by way of purely tonal values with an austere palette of rose, grey and white.

The most varied of the presented works are those by Guillermo Meza. Each of the four paintings widely differs in subject-matter from the others; yet all bear the stamp of a defined personality. Meza constructs with power and imagination and employs his color with dramatic juxtaposition.

Compositional rhythm, defined in a linear reiteration and a prismatic blending of color distinguish the paintings of Francisco Caracalla. At an earlier age an assistant to José Clemente Orozco, Rodríguez Caracalla, revealing no trace of this master's influence, has evolved his own peculiar manner of interpreting popular themes.

Of the seven painters whose works comprise this exhibit Juan Soriano is probably the most complex. The least "Mexican" of the entire group, he reveals in his delicate and compact compositions a well-assimilated influence of 18th century European masters adapted to Mexican backgrounds.

The heterogeny and creative independence defined in the work of these seven Mexican painters, who are broadly representative of the contemporary trend, reveal to an inspiring degree the underlying unebbing vitality of Mexican art.



Portrait. Oil.

By Juan Soriano.

"The Sea." Oil.

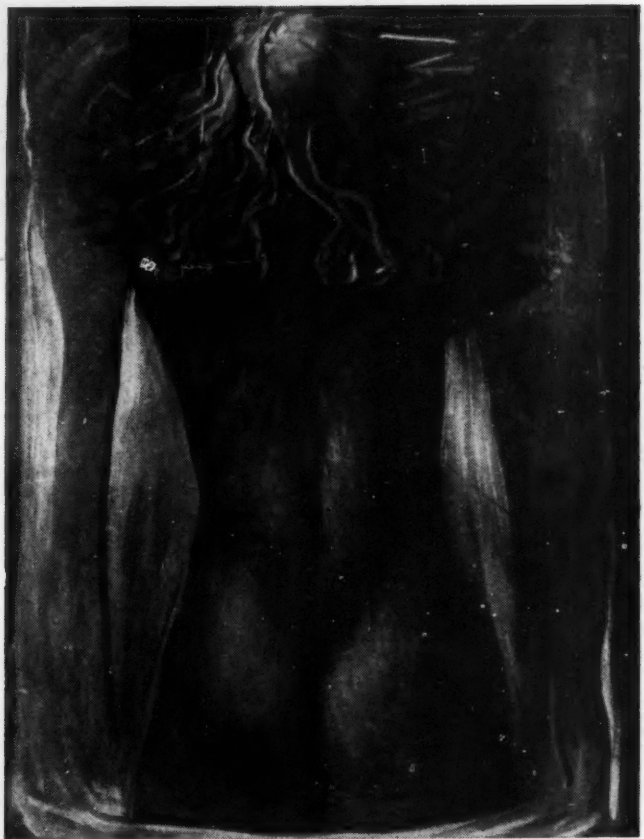
By Manuel Gonzalez Serrano.





"Juchiteca Weaver." Tempera.

By Raul Anguiano.



"Torso in Marble." Oil.

By Jorge Gonzales Camarena.



"The Magpie." Oil.

Un Poco de Todo

SPAIN'S ECONOMIC ILLS

WHILE most of the countries of Western Europe are struggling slowly to their feet after the shock of World War II, Spain has been slowly sagging at the knees, although it is more than ten years since her own civil war ended. The country is virtually bankrupt and to all intents and purposes is living on capital—selling the bonds to buy tomorrow's lunch or, in this particular case, mortgaging the national gold reserve to buy enough wheat to tide it over between harvests.

The grocer—Argentina—has refused further credit and the loan company—in this case United States banks—wants full collateral for anything that is lent. Spain is threatening to deal with pawnbroker Russia.

Visitors to Madrid find it hard to believe there is any economic crisis. The streets are crowded with new American cars, each of which in Spain (with duty and taxes and gasoline costs paid), represents about five times the investment it would be in the United States. There are several very good restaurants and hotels and many expensive night clubs. All do a rushing business and foreign visitors are often led to assume that this represents a national prosperity that has been concealed from the foreign press.

Apparently it would take supernatural powers to find an explanation for the wealth of a relatively small group of Spaniards who give that superficial impression. The truth is that Spain, as a nation, is practically broke now and that the vast majority of Spaniards, as individuals, have always been on the edge of hunger. Though probably not worse off now than they have always been, they are no better off.

One basic factor in this situation is the country's consumption of wheat. Wheat, it may be said in passing, is the usual standard for judging the food situation here because it is the most important single item in the diet. Under the Republican Government before the civil war, wheat consumption was 343 pounds per person a year. Wheat consumption is now estimated by the soundest authorities at about two-thirds of that figure—or 232 pounds.

To take another angle, the skilled worker—a foreman bricklayer or plasterer—on higher-paid levels gets \$1.20 daily. His hod carrier gets approximately half that, and it is difficult to understand how they feed themselves and their families on it.

Individual poverty, however, is a question of the social system, while the poverty of the nation is something that has slowly crept up on Spain through what might be called a Micawber economic policy. Though Spain came out of the civil war with the battered economy that might have been expected after three years of desperate internecine fighting, she escaped the devastation of World War II and seemed to have a fine opportunity for recovery.

Initial negotiations for loans in Europe fell through because the Franco regime stood on Spanish pride and refused to allow foreign supervision of or consultation on the use of money lent them. The Franco regime appears to an outside observer to have based its economy on the Micawber policy of believing that something will turn up; most of the time it is a United States loan it has had in the back of its mind. Spain's economic troubles have reached a crisis simply because a long time has passed without any measures being taken to remove the causes of these troubles.

Economic distress is constantly cited by non-Administration sources in Spain as the greatest potential threat to the stability of the Franco regime. This is true only in that if it reaches a certain pitch of intensity, the Army might insist on his retirement so that there would be a better chance of foreign aid.

Discontent among working people has increased considerably in the past three years, but that is not an important factor. Franco's grip on the country through the armed services and police is such that a popular rising is not to be considered as a possibility. By the same token, if the armed services decided a change was necessary, it would be made.

Knowing that the economic crisis was reaching the point where even the armed services might find a need for drastic action, the regime has taken the astonishing step of advertising for offers of grain on practically any terms. Rumors of efforts to deal with Russia for grains through private agents have not been denied here but cannot be confirmed. For at least two months, certain radical elements in the Falange party are said to have advocated turning away from the unfriendly Western powers and courting Russia. This policy would be used as a bogey man to frighten the United States into a friendlier attitude toward Franco as an anti-Communist bulwark.

There is an important distinction to be made in this connection. Spain would deal with Russia on a commercial basis without any compunction; believing that the purchase of what Spain needs would be more help to her than to Communist Russia. But any possibility of political contacts between Spain and Russia at this time appears to observers to be out of the question.

FOR A GENOCIDE TREATY

Guatemala has just ratified the convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide. Are the small countries of the world to be the guardians of the world conscience? The Genocide Convention, approved in principle unanimously by the General Assembly over a year ago, needs the ratification of at least twenty nations before it becomes law. Thus far only seven nations have ratified—Australia, Ethiopia, Iceland, Norway, Ecuador, Panama, Guatemala. The incredible paradox is that the United States, having taken a vigorous and inspiring lead in pressing for this international treaty, is now in the curious position of watching the ball being carried by lesser nations. Those who for years have worked hard in the State Department and civic organizations to develop one of the greatest civilizing ideas of our century into law are deeply perplexed that legal hair-splitters are now obstructing ratification by the Government.

In this country it is pretty widely agreed that if homicide is murder, then genocide—which is systematic homicide or the deliberate destruction of whole human groups for national, racial or religious reasons, by conquerors and dictators—is a far greater evil, at least deserves a law of its own, and must be punished by law. This a genocide treaty would do. And it is incredible that ratifications from the great Powers, particularly the United States, are suffering delay. This country has a long and honorable record of fighting genocide over the years. An international treaty would give it—and democracy-loving nations of the world—an instrument of real worth both in combating and preventing genocide in the future. On this issue its ratification is long overdue.

Literary Appraisals

PUERTO RICO'S ECONOMIC FUTURE. By Harvey S. Perloff. 478 pp. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

HOW poor is Puerto Rico? How long will the island be dependent on mainland help? Can any economic program solve the population problem? What constructive plan offers the best hope for the island's future?

These are the questions about Puerto Rico which interest mainland Americans, and these are the questions which Dr. Perloff attempts to answer in his comprehensive and valuable exposition of the Puerto Rican economy. His study is not so much an original piece of research as an interpretative review and analysis of all known facts, particularly the facts that have been disclosed by studies made under the auspices of the University of Puerto Rico's Social Science Research Center. Inside the covers of one volume Dr. Perloff, who is Associate at the University of Chicago, has managed to pull together almost all the data necessary to reach a judgment and a prophecy concerning the island's economic future.

By mainland standards the Puerto Rican economic story is not a happy one—three-fourths of the people sleep without a mattress and almost 40 per cent of the families have an income less than \$500 a year. But although the average income is about one-third that in Alabama, it is three times that of the small British islands of the Caribbean to the east, and Puerto Rico spends more money per capita on education and health than any Caribbean colony or republic.

The primary trouble is not American imperialism but natural and human deficiencies. Half the island's overcrowded land is not arable; its mineral wealth is insignificant; about half its food and most of its raw material for manufacturing must come from outside; and the best fish do not seem to fancy its blue-green waters. Its climate is superb for winter tourists, but its charms meet very stiff competition. Unrefined sugar is the big money-maker, with tobacco, fruits, rum and needlework far in the rear. Cane yields per acre have jumped 100 per cent since World War I, but the island would still find it almost impossible to sell sugar in a free world market because of the competition of lower-wage areas. To put it bluntly, Puerto Rico might be an economic graveyard if American tariff protection and American grants to the tune of nearly one-fourth of the insular income had not put a floor under its chronic depression.

Dr. Perloff wants more industrialization and he wants American aid continued without reduction. But he rightly feels that too many American grants in the past have been in the nature of unplanned and haphazard emergency relief. He wants aid in the future to be directed more systematically to making the island more self-supporting. He describes with approval the insular government's effort to attract outside capital for manufacturing and its interim program of publicly operated industries designed to absorb the ever-present unemployed. He believes that the island's tax system has been administered carelessly and that there has been too much evasion of income levies.

In agriculture it is evident that the experiment in mixed economy provided by the land law of 1941, with its nominal prohibition of the ownership of estates of more than 500 acres, has come to stay. Luis Munoz-Marin, whose Popular Democratic party was

largely responsible for the reform, is now the first elected Governor, and there is no sign of retreat in his program. The insular government's land authority has bought up about 68,000 acres from the large sugar estates and is supervising their cultivation under a scheme which combines a policy of social control with the distribution of incentive profits to managers. Under this scheme the land authority supplies the land and operating capital, and the manager receives a portion of the net proceeds.

Perhaps the major contribution of this work is the author's treatment of overpopulation as the most ominous threat to the island's future. It is not the island's birth rate as such which is producing overpopulation but the decreasing death rate. Puerto Rico's prosperity is caught in "the scissors." As one authority put it, "public health activities are acting as a kind of boomerang against the welfare of the island." Puerto Rico is not only one of the most densely populated areas on the globe but it probably has the highest rate of natural increase in the entire world.

Dr. Perloff believes that the spread of birth-control knowledge and practice will not meet the problem, and that Puerto Rico "cannot afford the time lag which was involved in the eventual flattening out" of population curves in Europe and the United States. Emigration will help, but it cannot be regarded as a solution, because the emigrants who treat New York City as their new frontier are usually the more intelligent Puerto Ricans who have learned something about planned parenthood already. The jibaros who are left behind are the ones who produce the largest families.

Is there any solution to the dilemma? Dr. Perloff's intelligent program offers hope, but it is in a sense a program of desperation. We cannot in conscience do less; we are more than likely to fail no matter what we do so long as the island's population continues to increase at its present rate.

P. B.

BOOKS OF THE BRAVE. By Irving A. Leonard. 381 pp. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

THE true measure of any civilization is the books that its people read for enjoyment, and in this scholarly work Dr. Leonard takes another healthy swipe at the Black Legend of Spanish colonial materialism and brutality.

The records, which he has searched with painstaking thoroughness, show a flourishing trade in books between the mother country and her new settlements throughout the sixteenth century. In spite of the reputed strictness of Inquisition censorship, plus the opposition of the humanists like Luis Vives, the Spaniards devoured romances of chivalry by the thousands, passing quickly to the realistic tradition of Mateo Aleman and the satire of Cervantes in the seventeenth century.

Also, as fast as the Indian and Negro wards of the Spaniards were taught to read Castilian, these Creoles became followers of the mighty deeds of Amadis and his fellows, heroes all, mighty in war and love, and later of the picares like Guzman de Alfarache. Dr. Leonard sees here the interplay of art and life, and correctly assumes deeds sometimes surpassed those of any fictional supermen, may have been inspired by their conning of fantastic novels.

All the absorbing details of the book are to be

found in Dr. Leonard's chapters. Business was so good in the colonies that many times whole first printings were snatched from the presses and rushed aboard the first galleon, leaving Spain itself to wait for the latest best-seller.

In fact, Dr. Leonard supposes that the first printing of the first part of "Don Quixote" in 1605 may all have been sent to the New World, and gives supporting details of great interest, although one may well doubt that he has fully made a case. The novel was at once popular in Spain and the speed with which it swept Europe would indicate that part of the first edition, at least, stayed at home.

Many of the copies of the first printing shipped by an enterprising bookseller in Alcala de Henares, the birthplace of Cervantes, to his partner in Lima, were lost en route, but the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance and Sancho Panza arrived in distant Cuzco almost as soon as they became known in Europe.

The total effect of this book is to throw new light upon the nature of the Spanish colonial culture so long completely misunderstood. As Dr. Leonard points out, we had to wait 150 years in this country before novel reading became accepted as even mildly respectable.

H. B.

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MEXICAN KALEIDOS OPE. By Norman Wright, F.R.G.S. With 24 Pages of illustrations. Heinemann. 1947. London (M. N. \$20)

T HIS book, written by Norman Wright, who was military attaché to the Mexican Government during the war, and first published in 1947, is a serious if brief study of the Mexican country and her people, with chapters on archaeology, natural history, the arts, and the Indians. The author is obviously an "aficionado," and he goes so far as to praise the Mexican habit of speaking between the teeth, contrasting this softer speech with the Spanish way of "putting in about twice as much work to say the same thing."

There is considerably more learning put into this book than is usual in a publication which can and does appeal to the general reader, and anyone who comes to Mexico with more than the most superficial tourists eye will do well to read it. The author visited many out-of-the-way parts, including the island of Tiburon, the land of the primitive Seri tribe, on whose customs there are some interesting observations.

There are several maps; and the photographs are good but might have been larger and less cramped.

I N.

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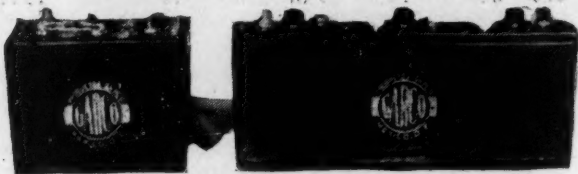
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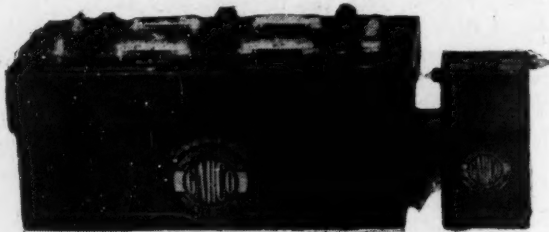
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NON-SCHEDULED FLIGHT. By R. L. Duffus. 235 pp.
New York: The Macmillan Company.

It isn't just an accident that we are able to fly just at the time that mankind feels the urge to fly from something." Thus, with a characteristic epigram, R. L. Duffus, the author and journalist, sets the mood for his new novel. "Non-Scheduled Flight" is a story about the age of flight—which is also a way of saying the age of fear. Mr. Duffus could have chosen no more expressive symbol of our time than an airplane full of frightened people.

Her intimates called her Mamie, and she was a four-engined plane getting along in years. Except for that elusive murmur in her Number Two engine, however, Mamie was in fine shape. On an April night she took off from New Orleans for Guatemala City.

With Mamie were eighteen human beings, collectively weighted with a complete line of mid-century woes. "Trouble," observes Mr. Duffus, "is a part of the baggage most people take along on pleasure trips." If so, Mamie carried a good deal more than safety regulations allow.

There was the elderly couple up front, each worrying about the other's heart. And the honeymooners, she an ex-WAC, he a one-time bomber pilot, rather lost in the planless aftermath of war. There were also an archaeologist, an alcoholic ex-Marine, a New York lawyer fleeing his psychiatrist; a minor State Department official named Breistein, sagging under the burden of his Jewishness, and a Miss Elsie 'Twill, schoolteacher, still fairly young and pretty but afraid to shed the chaste armor of spinsterhood.

If Mamie's passengers shared anything, it was a neurotic urge to retreat into the cozy preatomic, or pre-war, or pre-New Deal past. Like the Mayas whose dead empire they were flying over, they had lost confidence in their ability to meet the future. And, Mr. Duffus implies, should the cities of the West go the way of Nineveh and Tyre and Chichen Itzá, you can blame not the atom but a failure of nerve.



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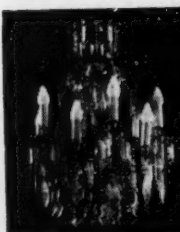
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R. M.

THIS I SAW: The Life and Times of Goya. By Antonina Vallentin. Translated from the French by Katherine Woods. Illustrated. 371 pp. New York: Random House.

T HIS I SAW" is an outstanding biography of one of the greatest painters of all time. It sets Goya in his epoch, gives a convincing account of the man, and deals exhaustively with his paintings and etchings. The title is taken from Goya's comment beneath one of his more harrowing etchings of the Disasters of War.

As a portrait painter, Goya was the historian of his period; he shows us not only the significant faces and figures of his day in Spain, but the violent break between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A provincial, a man of the people born deep in the conservatism of Spain, he observed and followed history. He did not lead it. But he learned from what he saw, and he saw sensuality, power, stupidity, war and death.

He became an archetype of the rights-of-man revolutionary in an age which shook down hierarchy only to bring in the dictatorship of Napoleon. This drama, played out in Paris, electrified and finally overwhelmed Europe. Goya saw his country welcome the French as liberators and fight with frenzy to oust

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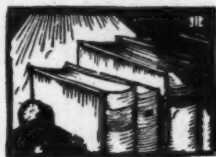
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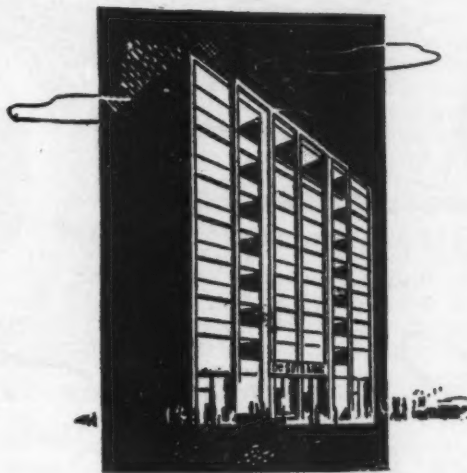
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MEN'S WEAR

them as foreigners, only to sink back into a nightmare of absolutism when the old "order" was restored.

Like so many Europeans then and since, Goya was caught between liberalism and nationalism. During the Peninsular Wars, as the new ideals withered and were consumed in nationalist fervor, Goya vibrated with compassion for his people, and painted and etched the deepening horror that he witnessed. At the time of his first recognition by the nobility he was able to write: "These princes are angels." In his old age he fled his country and died in exile at Bordeaux.

Antonina Vallentin crowds all this into a book with a novelist's skill. But the author shows an admirable fidelity to the biographer's limitations. Her method is to take a fact and build character out of it. She resists imagining events to suit a character. Goya's earlier biographers have not always been so scrupulous. Relatively little is known of his daily life, and the exasperating voids have been animated by a vast body of legend. The author examines this material only to let it drop regretfully, and the scholarly intent of the work heightens the impact of the story.

Miss Vallentin draws heavily on Goya's letters to his friend, Zapata, to strengthen the fabric of her text. But perhaps the best thing about her book is the use she makes of the paintings themselves, examining them and interpreting them as so many documents.

Antonina Vallentin has undertaken the genius theme before, in her studies of Leonardo and of Heine. Front rank genius cannot be defined, and it follows that one must hardly expect a definitive life; the subject refuses to be exhausted. Since Goya is himself a great artist, his biographer falls into the role of a conductor interpreting a major composition and presenting what should be taken as a personal version. So considered, this book is a splendid performance, and taken as a whole, it is an extraordinary response to Goya's life.

F. W.

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Current Attractions

THE SINKING PALACE

By Vane C. Dalton

WHEN back in 1900 the all-powerful Don Porfirio Diaz, yielding to an ambitious urge to erect the most luxurious theatrical edifice on this continent, placed the corner-stone of the Teatro Nacional, little did he suspect that at the end of fifty years this grandiose edifice would face the menace of being swallowed by the ground it stands on. Obviously, the old dictator had planned this sumptuous marble palace as a kind of monument to himself, firmly believing that it would endure through the centuries. But even before the structure was roofed, as if symbolizing the underlying precariousness of his own prolonged reign, it commenced to sink. By the time it was completed thirty years later, it was necessary to excavate it by lowering the surrounding street-level by several meters, and thus preserve it above ground.

The trouble originated in the faulty foundation designed by the eminent Italian architect Adam Boari who was imported for this job. Signor Boari's previous building experience had been acquired upon the firm bedrock of Italian soil, and he was probably unaware of the fact that Mexico City rests upon a thinly covered lake of mud. Having been, moreover, primarily engaged for the erection of a monument his attention was most likely centered on the complex elaboration of its external contours, on the appropriate blending of heterogeneous architectural styles, on the profuse array of bronze and marble statuary and the columnar adornments, in short, on the project of arranging a vast tonnage of ornate Carrara marble into a unified composite design, rather than on the effort to solve an extremely difficult engineering problem.

Thus, periodically, in the course of foregone years thousands of barrels of fluid concrete have been pumped under it, in the hope that it may provide a firmer table for it to rest upon, but this has not stayed the sinking. Each year the enormous building settles a few more inches deeper in the ground, further detaching itself from the stately porticos and exterior stairways, forcing their columns to assume a weird lopsided angle and cracking the marble walks which surround it.

Recently, the government engineers who—in the manner of a faithful nurse watching after an invalid—are entrusted with its care, have reached the alarming conclusion that unless effective measures are taken immediately the great pile of marble will be exposed to the imminent danger of actually falling apart. In order to confront this serious emergency the government has just concluded arrangements with an American firm of specialized engineers which provides for a preliminary study of the problem, the lifting of the building ten feet from its present level, and the construction of a foundation which will definitely prevent its sinking in the future.

The project will represent an expenditure of from three to five million pesos, adding that much more to the enormous original cost of this building, and to the sacrifice two generations of taxpayers have been compelled to make in order to satisfy Don Porfirio's whim. For it cannot be denied that in terms of practical collective benefit this building has never justified the investment it represents. Planned for the elite of 1910, it has never materialized the function for which it has been intended in later years. Its luxury and pomp are

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indeed anomalous in a Mexico which as yet is largely ridden with poverty and which is pursuing the democratic ideal. Its atmosphere, inside and out, stridently clashes with the spirit of our times.

Originally planned specifically for opera, the Palacio de Bellas Artes falls short of present-day requirements, being too large as well as visually and acoustically unsuitable for dramatic attractions, and not sufficiently large for symphony concerts or popular festivities.

Despite these practical shortcomings, the Palacio de Bellas Artes, commonly regarded as a national monument, as the seat of native culture and art, obviously cannot be abandoned. Confronted by the present emergency, the government is therefore compelled to sink additional good money to remedy as far as it is possible an originally bad job.

OPERA

In recent weeks our periodicals have devoted considerable space to the proposed fusion of the two local opera companies—the Opera Nacional and the Opera de Bellas Artes—as a practical means of preserving at least one company on a sound and solvent basis.

Since the proposal was launched by the official National Institute of Fine Arts, it has aroused the inevitable opposition of those who are inclined to prefer private initiative to government supervision. This opposition, however, reveals certain misconceptions.

The basic question is not that of official or private supervision but of economic exigency. The proposed fusion springs from the fact that there isn't enough money, obtained either from private or official sources, to maintain two opera companies in operation. On the other hand, while the Opera Nacional company has been guided by private initiative, it cannot be considered an independent commercial enterprise for the reason that a considerable portion of its wherewithal came from official or semi-official subsidies.

Therefore, it becomes obvious that since both companies virtually depend upon the same sources of

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financial support their function represents a needless and even wasteful duplication of effort. It is quite evident that the fusion of these two companies would assure us of at least one good annual season of opera instead of two poor ones.

It must be pointed out that of the two companies the Opera Nacional, having presented seven consecutive annual seasons, undoubtedly has a much firmer standing than the comparatively new Bellas Artes company. Its artistic achievement has been truly notable. However, it is commonly known that its present economic position is far from being secure. In fact, despite the outstanding success of its last year's season, rumors were afloat at its conclusion that it may not be in position to undertake a similar season this year.

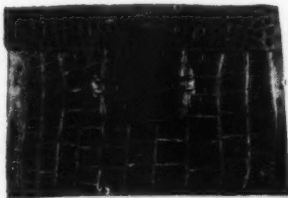
Thus, the proposed fusion might actually signify the only means of preserving opera alive in our midst.

MUSIC

AFTER an inexplicably dull interim of several months, which gave us almost nothing in the way of worth-while musical attractions, the Daniel Musical Association is resuming its activities by offering a season of ten symphony concerts by the Philharmonic Orchestra which will extend through the forthcoming weeks.

The opening two programs will be conducted by Jose Yves Limantour, director of the Jalapa Symphony Orchestra, while the remaining eight will be presented by the guest conductors Arthur Rodzinski and Raphael Kubelik. The following soloists have been engaged for this season: Claudio Arrau, Nathan Milstein, Irma Gonzalez, Arthur Rubinstein, Sigi Weissenberg, Alexander Uninsky, Isaac Stern, Yehudi Menuhin, Rudolf Firkusny and the New Italian Quartet.

Glancing at this distinguished list of musicians, most of whom are known to our public, makes us wistfully recall the bygone years when we were seldom denied good musical offerings. But our pesos were then worth twice as much in term of dollar exchange, which made it possible for our impresarios to pay quite heavy fees in dollars and yet keep out of the red.



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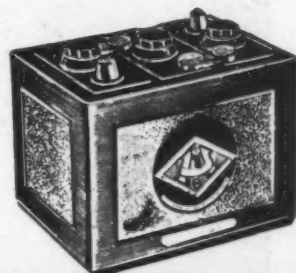
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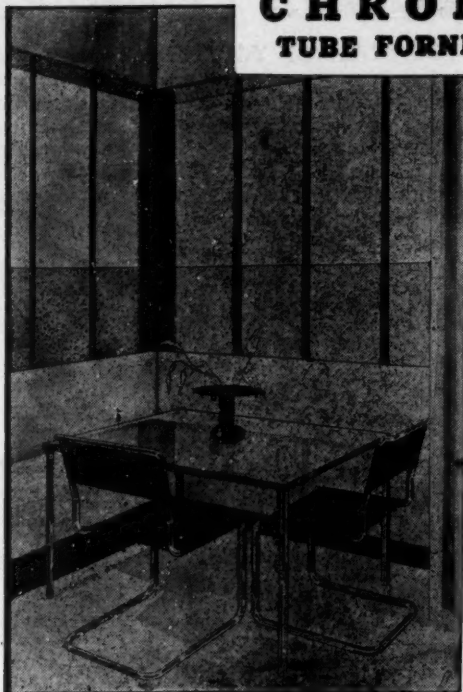
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Art and Personal Notes

CELIA CALDERON, a gifted young painter, was introduced to the public last month in a quite impressive exhibit of paintings, drawings and prints offered by the Salon de la Plastica Mexicana (Calle de Puebla No. 154). Though obviously influenced by the late Raúl Castellanos, the work of this young woman reveals nevertheless clear signs of a budding personality. She draws with a sure and sensitive hand composes imaginatively, and employs her colors with discernment and taste.

In addition to this exhibit this gallery presented a collection of canvases by some of our outstanding contemporary painters. These included new works by Olga Costa, Xaviér Guerrero, Juan O'Gorman, Amador Lugo, Chavez Morado, Juan Soriano, Luis Nishizawa, Carlos Mérida, Castro Pacheco, Gustavo Montoya and Carlos Orozco Romero.

Ablly administrated by Suzana Gamboa, the Salon de la Plastica Mexicana, affording an outlet for our recognized talents, is rapidly gathering well-deserved prestige.

FORTY works in a variety of mediums comprise the current one-man show of Humberto Maldonado Zambrano at the Romano Gallery (Jose Maria Marroqui No. 5) Especially interesting in this show are his fanciful compositions in crayon.

A GROUP of abstract compositions by William Getman, an American painter who is residing in Mexico, were shown last month at the Galeria Arte Moderno (Plaza Santos Degollado No. 16—C).

FOLLOWING the highly successful exhibit of paintings by Ramon Espino Barros, the Circulo de Bellas Artes is presenting in the course of this month a collective exhibition of works by eighteen local painters of established renown and widely distinct personalities. Outstanding in this varied show are the excel-



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lent landscapes in oil by Margarita Weihmann and the water colors by Pastor Velazquez.

A TENEO ESPAÑOL DE MEXICO (Avenida Morelos No. 219) is offering in the course of this month a group of twenty-six paintings in oil by Mége, the distinguished French painter who has been making her home in Mexico during the foregone eight years. Landscapes, still life and portraits comprise this unusually fine exhibit.

G ERMAN CUETO, who is instructing Advanced Sculpture at Mexico City College, is holding an exhibit of his work at the College art department (Coahuila No. 223). The exhibit includes a number of abstractions in bronze, copper, aluminum, stone, wood and wire, evolved in a peculiar technique.

T ALLER de GRAFICA POPULAR (Netzahualcoyotl No. 9) is celebrating its 12th anniversary with an exhibit of prints, drawings and paintings by its artist-members. These include works by Angelina Belloff, Marta Adams, Valetta Swann, Leopoldo Mendez, Pablo O'Higgins, Ignacio Aguirre, Alberto Beltrán, Raúl Anguiano, Angel Bracho, Xavier Guerrero, José Chavez Morado and Francisco Dosamantes.

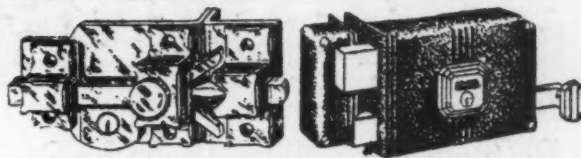
This highly significant exhibition will be open to the public during the entire month of February.

P AINTINGS in oil by the noted Spanish artist Arturo Souto, who has been residing in our midst during the past nine years, may be seen at the Clardecor Gallery (Paseo de la Reforma No. 226).

K ENNETH BELDIN'S adaptations in copper and brass of early Pre-Columbian sculpture are being

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given at this time their initial public exhibit at the Mexican-American Cultural Institute (Yucatan No. 63).

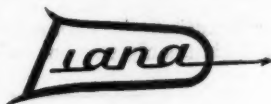
E LEVEN MEXICAN painters of the younger generation are represented in a quite interesting collective show currently offered by the Galeria Artistas Contemporaneos (Rep. de Argentina No. 21).

Patterns of an Old City . . .

Continued from page 12

vant woman to look after the household and went back to his job. He returned at the end of each fortnight, and although during the two days he stayed with his son he bought him presents, took him to picture shows and sought to be friendly and kind, his manner was forced and constrained. He repeatedly told him that he must make an effort to forget his mother, for she was selfish and wicked and unworthy of being remembered, and that before long everything would be straightened out and it would all come out for the better.

During those lonely months Memo's face, which Bibi always regarded as amusingly odd, assumed a peculiar fixed expression. He seemed to have lost the ability to laugh, and when he smiled his eyes remained stern and his mouth turned downward as if it pained him. But to Bibi's relief he did not cry as often as he did before. He spent with him most of his time after school hours and on his grandmother's insistence often stayed for the meals. "You are growing now," she would say, "and if you don't eat well



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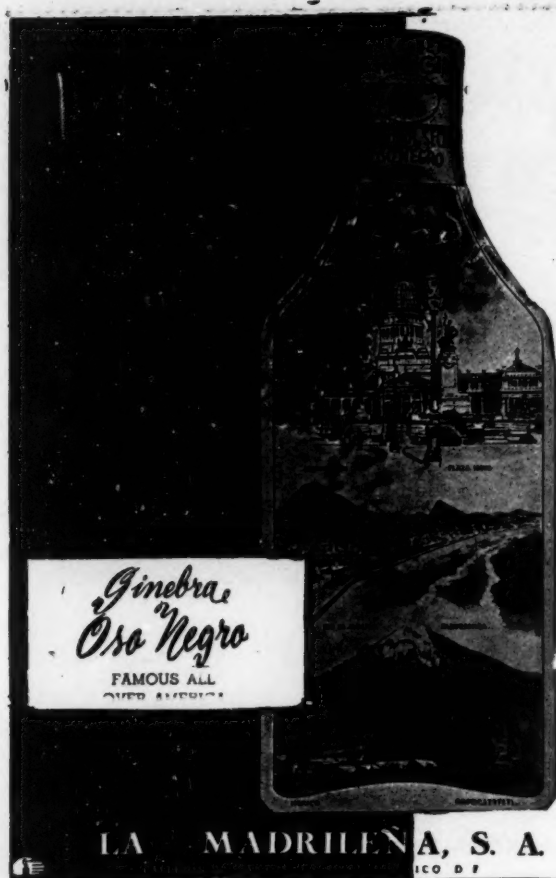


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CERVECERIA MOCTEZUMA, S. A.

and take good care of yourself you might get sick... You are getting so bony and frail," she would add with a chuckle, "that your head is much too big for your body."

* * *

Then one day, when Memo's father came home he brought with him a strange young woman whom he presented to him as his new mama. "Now you won't be left by yourself any more," he said. "You'll have someone to look after you. So I hope you'll be a good boy and obey her." Memo became tongue-tied and felt faint from the strong odor of perfume when she drew him to her and told him that they were going to be real good friends and that she would truly be his mama.

Bibi, who had always felt quite content having only a grandmother, thought that there was something quite funny in this business of a boy getting a new mama. He never knew that mamas could be obtained the same as a pair of roller-skates or a new stamp album. But when he saw her he liked her almost instantly. She was very pretty, he thought, and it surprised him to discover that she was so very young.

Soon a firm friendship was established between them. Memo's father had resumed his former routine, and during the days of his absence, after school hours and when they had finished their homework, the three became inseparable companions. Memo's mama seemed not at all like a grownup person. She liked to romp and wrestle with the boys, and she was always laughing over nothing at all; she played a guitar and sang funny songs and taught them to dance and play amusing games. She said that she had always been something of a tomboy and that before she grew up she always preferred to play with boys rather than with girls. They went rowing in Chapultepec Park or played ballgames in the prados, and she showed them how to make and fly kites.

Bibi thought she was wonderful and that his friend was lucky indeed to have a mama like that. He was sure that if he could have one himself, he could not possibly wish for one more perfect than she. He found that chumming with Memo was much more fun since she came. He stopped being moody and nervous, had put on weight, so that his head did not seem funny and big, and had lost the annoying habit of crying.

Hence, it deeply puzzled Bibi at times to hear his grandmother disapprovingly murmur to herself such strange words as "...A loose one... A pretty

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wench from Guadalajara... Paint, perfume and red pants... To no good end..." And it puzzled him even more when she sought, gently, on vague pretext, by hint rather than order, to make him stay home rather than spend all his leisure time in the flat across the court.

Presently, as if sensing the old lady's feelings, Memo again began to frequent Bibi's house. Occasionally his mama came along with him, but apparently she didn't enjoy leaving the boys to their pastimes and quietly chatting with the grandmother, and did not stay long. As the months went by, while the three of them still occasionally enjoyed their larks, their fellowship had lost its former constancy.

It was during the dreary afternoons of the rainy season when it was impossible to play outdoors that Bibi grew aware of a gradual change in his friend: he knew without comprehending that in some baffling way things were not the same, that their friendship had been profoundly altered by something which Memo kept hidden inside himself, something which he was unable to understand or explain. He seemed cheerless and moody again, and though Bibi wished he could do something about it, he knew there was nothing he could do.

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Then, one night, they were again aroused from their sleep by a knock on the door. When it was opened Memo darted into the room as if he were being pursued. He stood on bare feet, his bony arms and legs protruding from the folds of a faded pink blanket, trembling, speechless, staring at them with terror-ridden eyes.

His lips twitched to their queries without uttering a sound. And as Bibi watched him crumple down on the floor and sob bitterly, in his complete incomprehension and in the overwhelming pity and fright which gripped his heart there was a minute abhorrence.



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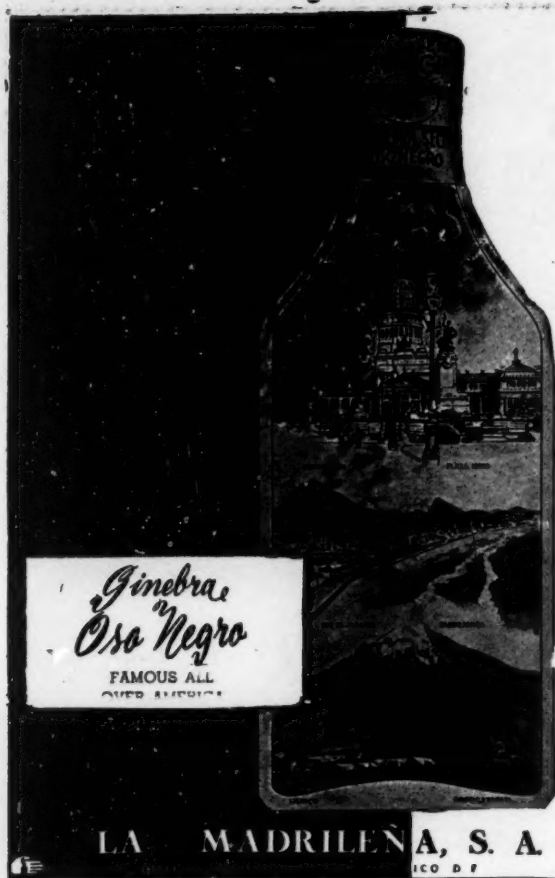
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CERVECERIA MOCTEZUMA, S. A.

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The Barrancas . . .

Continued from page 26

built many times. Just as in the case of the missions of California. I used to stand in their shadows and imagine myself standing with the good Father Junipero Serra until I discovered that Serra only saw one or two of the present missions. Many of them are not even on the spots that he built. The mission at Santa Barbara has been completely rebuilt four times.

I have spent a great part of my life admiring the voices that were off key, and standing transfixed with admiration in front of pictures that the committee was about to banish to the dark cellars: so, in a hoarse whisper of warning, I will pass on the verdicts of Dr. Atl. He says that the cathedral at Puebla is by far the finest in Mexico. In Guadalajara the best architecture is to be found in the Santuario and the Church of San Felipe de Jesus. So now, if you go home, raving over the wrong church, don't blame me.

Swamp Grass and Quicksand . . .

Continued from page 15

No sound, except the sighing of the wind and the ceaseless murmur of the waters, broke the stillness.

The silence was shattered by an explosive report. Startled, we turned quickly to see a large alligator swim off. It had slid unseen down the incline of a log and smacked the water. Skimming along like an

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aquaplane, its body seemed hardly to touch the surface, and its feet thrashed the water like paddle wheels.

"What do you say we go into the swamp? I'd like to explore one."

"I suppose if we're ever going to know anything about one at first hand, we'll have to go into it," Ginger answered. "But we're sure to get wet and dirty—it looks deep."

We plunged off into the ooze, and were soon waist-deep in slime and water that was full of living matter. Leeches fastened themselves on our legs, and our feet began to itch with sabañones, a fungus which lives in the mud and attacks the feet. It was difficult to make headway because of the tangled, rotting vegetation. Each step was a gamble. We had often wondered whether a human being could traverse a tropical swamp, and what his sensations would be once in one. Now we were finding out. In many spots we sank to our armpits in the ooze, holding our gun belts and machetes high above our heads. Snakes slithered into the water, and clouds of mosquitoes swarmed in the gloom. At last we emerged on to firmer ground.

We began to follow the firmer ground back to camp, crawling through dense mangrove thickets, until we came to a large open stretch of sand, perhaps five hundred feet long. Its surface was unbroken except for a little tide drift, and it was as flat as a billiard table. "This is surely a break for us," I said. "Wish we had this kind of travelling all the way back." Tall, straight mangrove trees fringed the sand island, and though there was nothing obviously wrong about it, I began to have an uneasy feeling as we approached it. For some unknown reason I shuddered and stopped.

"What's the matter?" Ginger asked.

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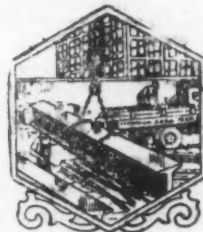
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"I don't know, unless I've got the jitters from the swamp. Or maybe the wind's gone down and some Mareños are on their way to play with us. Let's go." I shook off the premonition and led the way across the sand.


About thirty feet further on, another sharp premonition of danger swept over me. "Come on, Ginger, let's go back to the mangroves. There's trouble here."

"I feel that way myself." Ginger was puzzled. "But what about? I can't see anything wrong."


Nevertheless, it seemed best to play the hunch, so we started back the way we had come. Then it happened. Without an instant's warning, I broke through the surface of the sand and went down to my knees. A circle of water appeared on the sand round me. "Run, Ginger!" I shouted. She ran for the mangroves, water appearing in each footstep as she sped towards the trees.

Now I had sunk in the quicksand to above my knees. Struggling would only make me sink the faster. My mind raced helplessly over the few alternatives for action. A few seconds delay might be gained by distributing my weight over as big an area as possible, so I threw my body forward. Ginger was lopping off branches as fast as she could; but it was evident that by the time she could cut enough to make a path in and out, I'd be under. Furthermore, I couldn't climb out of my sandy tomb without the aid of heavy pieces of wood to use as hoists. It was doubtful if she could drag them across the semi-fluid surface without getting sucked in herself, even if she had time to procure them.

The sand was now creeping round my waist. I looked at the sky. The tall trees silhouetted against it gave me one last forlorn hope. I called to Ginger, "Try cutting down that tall tree nearest me, and fell it this way." She quickly attacked it with swift strokes of her machete. The sand had reached my armpits. The scheme was hopeless; she couldn't get the tree down in time. Her sobs mingled with the ring of the machete as she cast quick glances in my direction, and then redoubled the fury of her attack upon the hard mangrove wood. What would become of her?



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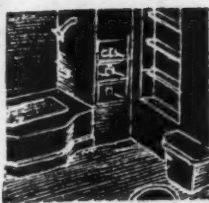
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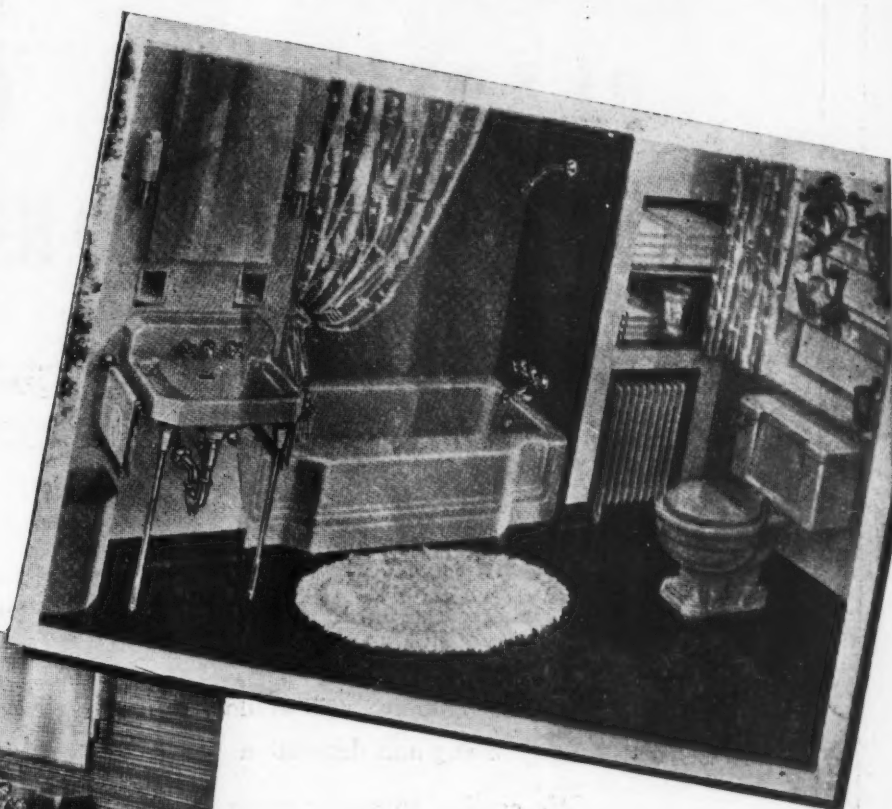
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How could she ever get out of the country alone? Black panic seized me. We had often told ourselves that death was only a moment of acute discomfort, and soon over. But this other thing? We were a team, reinforcing each other physically and morally; we could face together any contingency, but alone... I didn't know.

My arms were raised and the sand had crept up round my shoulders, when Ginger looked again. With a cry of horror she slashed at the tree from another angle. Then a thrill of joy shot up from my toes. With only my head and forearms above the sand, I had hit bottom. I sent up a prayer of thankfulness; and turned to shout the good news to Ginger. But at that moment she turned. Seeing just my head above the surface of the sand, she dropped her machete and ran for the small stack of branches she had piled near the edge of the quagmire. I knew what was in her mind. She was going to pick up that futile bunch of branches and run out to me with them. And she, too, would be caught in the treacherous sand. Nothing I could say would stop her if she thought I was simply trying to prevent her from taking the risk. But she must be stopped. Some word, some counter suggestion of danger equally imperative that she would respond to automatically. I had it! I shouted with all the emphasis and fear that I could put into it, "Ginger! Quick—Mareños!"

She whirled, dropping the branches and reaching for her gun. Then quietly, in a matter-of-fact voice, I said, "Listen, I've struck bottom. The danger is over."

"What did you say?" she asked in a dazed, uncomprehending voice. I repeated the news. "But the Mareños?" she questioned. I explained. At last she understood and went back to tree-cutting.

I had instructed her to fell the tree in my direction. It not only fell "in" but on. I saw it coming,

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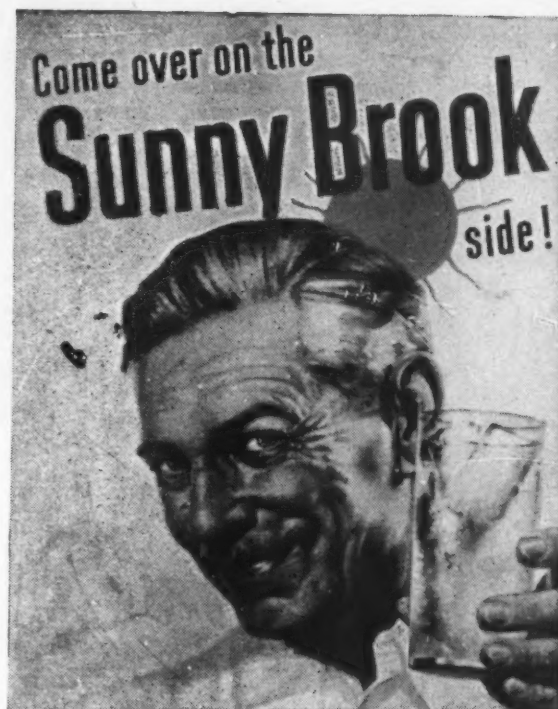
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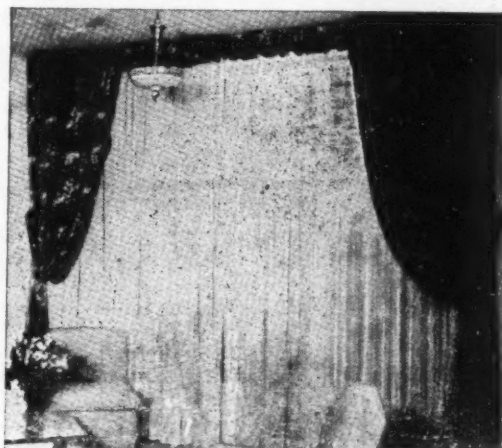
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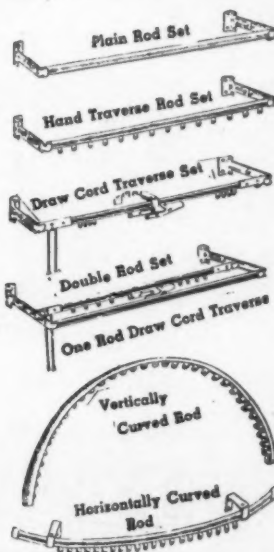
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closed my eyes, and ducked down in the sandy ooze. The sand shivered and shook with the impact. I tried to get my head above the surface, bumping it against the trunk. At last I was out in the air again, but could neither see nor breathe. Sand plastered my eyes and plugged my nose and mouth. Although my arms were above the surface, they were caught in the branches and I couldn't use them. Then Ginger was there, doing the job for me. After she cleaned my face, I opened my eyes and stared up into her tear-stained face, trying to smile reassuringly. "Well, so far so good, but how am I going to get out of here? I'm stuck fast."

We tried using various arrangements of branches, but I could secure no leverage with any of them. Exerting pressure on anything placed upon the surface of the quicksand simply caused it to yield. Then we had a new idea. Ginger cut and trimmed a limb close to the crotch, so that it formed a hook with an eight foot handle. We worked this down beside my leg, and with a great deal of wriggling, I finally managed to get my foot in the stirrup. After considerable manoeuvring I bent by knee into a walking position. With the aid of my crutch, and by pulling myself along on the overhead branches, I could move forward an inch or two at a time. Quick-sand is easy to get into, but it's hell to get out of; and it was an hour before we scrambled over the fallen tree, and at last set down on terra firma. And it takes quicksand to make you appreciate what that phrase means!

I took the sand-clogged Lugger from its holster and looked at it ruefully. "Well, there's no use doing any more hunting today," I said. "We might as well go back to camp."

The norther blew itself out sometime during the night, and soon after sunup we pulled away from the little shell beach. Approaching the southern terminus of the island, we found our way blocked by a long sand bar extending out from the point of the island due west to the faint shore line that separated the gulf from the lagoon. It was a matted tangle of brush,

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stumps, and tide drift, so we went back to the island and portaged across our old camp site to the opposite side of the pampa. Once again we embarked, our goal an estuary leading into the next series of waterways.

Juchitán Wedding . . .

Continued from page 12

mitted a breach of etiquette in leaving so soon. But at any rate I still had my cigarette behind my ear, as Electra had hers, and I would not touch it until she touched hers.

'Our life is very different from yours,' Electra said, courteously making conversation.

'Different, but more interesting.'

'Ah, you think so?' Her green eyes were opaquely polite. 'I think you must laugh at us here.'

'No, I am sorry if you think so.'

She was silent, walking supplely in her high-heeled shoes. I had thought she was tall, but walking beside her I found I was the taller. It is the flowing dress and splendid walk of the Juchitán women that gives an illusion of tallness.

'I have been to the capital,' Electra said. 'There it is very different from here. They laughed at me there. I went dressed just as I do here, and the boys ran after me on the street and called: "Hungarian!"' Is it true that the Hungarians dress as we do?

'There is great similarity.'

'Then they, too, are of Tehuantepec?'

'No, they are of Europe.'

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'How rare,' she mused, 'that they are not of Tehuantepec and should dress the same. Still, I did not like being laughed at. The capital is very wonderful, but I could not live there. They laugh at us and they do not speak Zapotecan.'

'But you speak Spanish too.'

'Apenas,' she said. 'Hardly. I believe you speak more of Spanish than I do.'

'Oh no.'

'Certainly. We are taught Spanish in school, but Zapotecan is our language.'

'But you see how useful Spanish is, for we can understand each other.'

'Really?' Her eyes gave no hint of mockery, but I was not sure. 'Over there'—she pointed across an empty lot that looked as though it were in the slow process of being turned into a playground—is the church.'

It stood behind a rusted iron gate, a very plain medieval-looking mass of stone, bespeaking the earliest period of the Spanish church-builders. Perhaps the work of the Franciscan friars who did not have much time for building churches while they converted Indian souls by the thousands.

'It is always kept closed,' Electra said rather sadly, 'and there is no priest. But tomorrow one is coming from Tehuantepec to marry the betrothed couple. That will be done in the chapel, which is always kept closed too, but tomorrow the priest will open it.'

We came to the plaza and sat down near the bust of Juárez. There are two statues that haunt Mexico. One is the statue of Cuauhtemoe, the Aztec prince who defied the Spaniards. He stands on the Reforma in his Indian mantle and plumed headdress with his long spear raised for hurling; and replicas of him are likely to appear anywhere. The other is the statue of Juárez, an Indian too, and the great national hero of modern Mexico. Cuauhtemoe crops up all over in little souvenir copies, much like our Statue of Liberty. Juárez has the plazas. This one happened to be a very bad machine-made bust. I had expected something better, for Juárez was of the same blood as the

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people of Juchitán. The plaza was deserted, flecked with sun and shade on the white benches and on the bandstand in the center.

'There is never any music,' Electra said, continuing her sad record of things abandoned. But it was only Spain that was abandoned—the closed church, the disused plaza. The life of Juchitán is still Indian, and the marriage of the bridal pair in the chapel would be the merest incident in the long pagan wedding ceremonies, ceremonies so old that their meaning is forgotten, or only told obscurely on the lips of some ancient of the village.

'Are you anxious to see the bride?' Electra asked.

'I am very curious.'

'To me she is not pretty,' Electra said disdainfully. 'But she is marrying very well. Her husband is rich and they will go to live in the capital, where he teaches. I would not like that, living in the capital.'

'But if your husband wished it?'

'Pues... I have no husband.'

'But when you have one...'

She was silent a moment. I do not think I will ever have one.'

'But you are young and pretty.'

'Oh no, I am old. The question is over for me.'

'I think you will marry very soon.'

'No, I think it will not be.'

She shook her head and I wondered what had happened to her. Perhaps she was disappointed in love, or perhaps there had never been a mate for her in Juchitán. They say that the women of Juchitán outnumber the men. Or it may have been some strangeness in herself, something for a psychiatrist to unravel. For there is no climate in the world where the human heart will not go awry. But whatever



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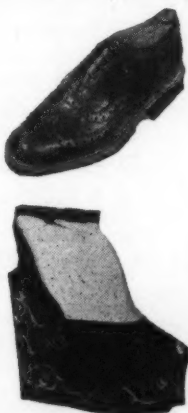
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it was, she had become one of that sad sisterhood scattered over the world—a maiden aunt. Poor Electra! The Mexicans say of a spinster that 'she stayed to dress the saints.' But here the church was closed, and there were not even the pale waxen figures of the saints to dress. She was looking out over the plaza, where the wind whirled dust around the forsaken bandstand.

'It is sad here,' she said, 'I do not know what it is, but sometimes I feel a great sadness.'

* * *

When we returned to the house, Alpha was there with Andrés, her sweetheart, and Chavo; and we sat down to a meal of turtles' eggs and goat meat, served by Electra. All the women but Alpha ate in the big smoky barn in back of the patio.

I had met Andrés in Mexico City, and from the first he had treated me with affable mockery.

'She comes from the United States,' he said, introducing me to Chavo. 'A country strong but stupid.'

'I have been to your country,' Chavo said in English. 'I have been there before I have come to Mexico. I have learned English there.'

'She comes from New York,' Andrés said, 'They do not speak much English there.'

'I have been in New York,' Chavo continued. 'It is wonderful. So many sky-scrapers.'

'She does not understand you.'

'And I have learned a song of your country—"O Columbia the Gin of the Ocean."'

'Gem,' I said.

'Gin,' he insisted. 'That is how I have learned it.' They both sang it with their hands to their hearts.

Chavo was a refugee from Spain. His wife and child were still in a concentration camp in France and he had not heard from them for many months. He took out a picture and showed it to me. 'I have never seen the boy,' he said, 'because he was born after I

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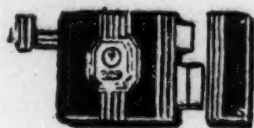
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came to Mexico. But he looks like me, doesn't he? All he needs is the mustache.'

Andrés, too, had fought in Spain, and the talk of the Spanish civil war continued late into the afternoon, the distant clamor of arms through the wind of Juchitán. Then we heard the first imperious notes of the marimba, carried on the wind. The wedding dance had begun.

Strictly speaking, there were not four wedding dances, but rather a continuous state of dancing, a sort of common village responsibility not to let the dance die down. So that people went home to sleep only for a few hours, and then were up again to take over from those who had not yet slept. And day and night the women put on their best huipils and long ruffled skirts, and their ornaments of shining Yankee coins; and day and night the wind carried the sound of the marimba tirelessly beating out slow Cuban danzones, until it seemed like the sound of the wind itself.

The first dance began with staid formalities. The women sat with downcast eyes, their aloof modesty belying the provocation of their bright huipils and tinkling gold ornaments. The men stood apart, talking, with only an occasional glance for the women. Night had come, and the flaring torches threw a painted green light on the leafy canopy and bronze shadows on the faces of the marimba players, studiously beating the instrument in a corner. 'One dances only with those one knows,' Alpha said. She had twined red ribbons in her hair, and her earrings gleamed under the dark braids. All the women, even the wrinkled old ones who had come only to gossip, were resplendent in their native dress. But the dressing-up of the men had brought them to a sad drabness. They looked

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awkward in their city clothes, not mated to the pagan splendor of the women. Andrés and Alpha were the first to dance a languorous two-step; and as each couple joined, the young bloods gathered outside raised a derisive shout. Unseen but heard, like ribald birds haunting the canopy, they improvised couplets about the dancers. Everyone stopped dancing and listened when the couplet promised to be especially spicy. There was a couplet for Chavo and me, of which I caught only the word *gringa*, for the rest was in Zapotecan. And Andrés would not translate or tell me why everyone had laughed.

Later came the Sandunga. It is the dance of the isthmus, and it began with a stir of expectancy, a flourish on the marimba, and the word 'Sandunga' like a warning and a call from mouth to mouth. First the women danced alone, a quiet polka step, demurely holding their skirts. The men joined slowly, shuffling around their partners, with their hands behind their backs. Save for the unvarying step, the holding of the skirts, and the posture of the men, the figures are informal and the dancers move freely as they will, self-absorbed, though always oriented toward their partners. Courtship and indifference, pursuit and retreat, chastely stylized; while only the anguished cry, 'Ay, Sandunga!' carries the inner tension.

Chavo and I did not dance the Sandunga, for without the mood of inner absorption, which is not to be learned, one cannot dance it. We sat watching and listening to the eloquent comments of Andrés' uncle. An old fellow with a melancholy Indian face, he had attached himself to us like a one-man Chamber of Commerce, to see that we stayed in a constant glow of appreciation. 'The things of Juchitán!' he cried, beating his breast with one hand while a gesture of the other encompassed the dancers. 'The things that are very much ours! Observe, O strangers, the quaint customs of my people. Go forth and publish them to the world.' Later, when the Sandunga was over and every-

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one went out to take refreshments under the sky where the stars seem so strangely low, he cornered us and began to talk about Juárez, whom he called 'the exquisite Indian.'

'I see him in the hills of Oaxaca—a simple shepherd lad feeding his flock, unaware of the great destiny that awaits him.' The narrative lengthened, the gestures grew more dramatic, and people gathered around him.

We danced that night until the wind of morning began, and then, after a few hours' sleep haunted by the sound of the marimba, we followed the wedding procession through the wind and the dust to the ancient chapel where the priest who had come from Tehuantepec performed the marriage rite. And we danced all of that day and again the next morning, when all the women came with colored pinwheels and loaves of corn bread that they gave to the bride. But at night the bride and groom left the dance, and everyone looked toward the bride's home, waiting for the fireworks which would show that the bride was a virgin.

Mariana who was selling refreshments told us about it. 'Now it is over,' she said, 'there will be only one more dance tomorrow, for the old men and the old women, when they will get drunk and tear their clothes and scream, not knowing what they are doing. But now it is over for the bridal pair, all but the proving.'

How sad the bride will be tonight, how she will cry.'

'And if there are no fireworks?' Chavo asked.

'Then, señor, it will mean she was not a virgin. Then her husband will torture her. He will beat her and ask: Who was it? He will beat her until she confesses, and then he will return her to her mother.'

'How, if they are already married...'

'Even so, señor. But possibly he may choose to keep her, only it will be very bad for her. He will torture her all the time and make her very miserable. However,' she added with a shrug of contempt, 'I believe she will be a virgin. These rich ones, they



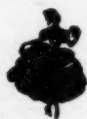
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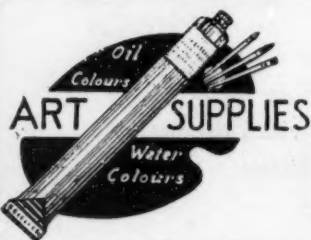
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save themselves. She will be a virgin, but she will cry just the same.'

We asked why the bride would cry just the same.

'Because it will be the first time,' Mariana said, 'and she will suffer very much.'

Andrés's uncle was very drunk that night. He began to beat his breast for his mestizo blood. 'Look at me,' he said abjectly, 'I am not pure Indian! My blood has been adulterated with the blood of the conquerors. That is my great sorrow. Yes, I must confess, I am not pure Indian. I am the degenerate son of a once proud race.' He became more and more abject, pointed to himself as one whose life had been miscast in a backward little pueblo, and said the only thing he could be proud of in a misspent life was that he had given Andrés wings to fly from Juchitán. 'Wings!' he cried, flailing his arms and eyeing us fiercely. 'Wings to fly from this wretched little village.' His daughter finally came and dragged him away, and he had time only for a last wave of the hand while he exhorted us: 'Go forth, O strangers, sing my race, sing my people!'

Chavo obeyed him that very night by learning a song in Zapotecan, after the fireworks had come and nearly everyone had gone home, and only a few couples remained, dancing over the ground strewn with confetti. He had wanted a piano, but failing that he took charge of the marimba and played the songs of the Spanish civil war on it. And then one of the musicians taught him a lovesong of Juchitán. 'The corn and beans are ripe in my field, for you beloved...' But Chavo learned the words in Zapotecan. The next morning he sang them in the market-place, while we were having refrescos, to a crowd of open-mouthed listeners. I can still remember the delighted, hypnotized smile on the face of one of the little boys when he heard his own speech coming so strangely from alien lips—that which must be a fairly pleasurable experience for the first time, and for a young provincial the beginning of wisdom that there are other worlds beyond his own.

The market-place of Juchitán, as in all Tehuantepec, is kept entirely by the women, while the men are relegated to the inferior work of the fields. And



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whenever we went through the market it was a holiday for the women. They would have it that Chavo and I were brother and sister, because, 'Look you! they are both blond.' And because of our strange blondness we were treated with awe, but also with contempt—like conquering heroes who could only honor them by deigning to buy, but also like prisoners of war who must run a gantlet of uncomplimentary remarks. Especially about Chavo's hair, which is very curly. Andrés translated for us: It was like a rat's nest. It was like a fence covered with brambles, like a leafy arbor, like the way out of a mountain.

Mariana kept a stand under the portico, and whenever we came she greeted us with: 'What does your heart say?' Our hearts usually said spicy tostadas, and while we ate she told us about her man who was away working on the roadbuilding, and how she would not marry him because then he would begin to boss her. 'It is only for the rich,' he said, 'marriage!' She was good-looking like all the women of Juchitán, but very short and plump, and when she spoke she looked thoughtfully at Chavo.

We went to the last dance, and watched the drunken antics of the old people. They danced over their vomit, smirking and mimicking the graces of the young. The marimba beat out a tom-tom, and they began to cavort around, crouching, almost on all fours, a dance from the ancient past which needed masks and animal heads. Mariana was there, very drunk and undone, and she came over and asked Chavo to dance with her. When he hesitated she burst into tears. 'You despise me!' she said, looking up at the six feet of Chavo and his hair shining in the sun. 'You really despise me!' He danced with her.

It was the last of the wedding festivities, and at night only the sound of the wind blew through the plaza. Outside the cantina that cast the only light in

the windy darkness, we sat drinking beer with the village celebrities—the poet who wrote the song Chavo learned, and Andrés's uncle who teaches in the school, and the deputy to the National Congress. The deputy, a burly fellow with a back-slapping manner learned in the capital, threw his leg over his bench as though he were mounting horseback. He was dressed like a campesino and two splendid pistols gleamed in his belt.

'He is a politician,' Andrés told me, sotto voce. 'Not the best we can do, but he is in favor of schools.'

The talk was of asking the Government for another school in Juchitán, and of starting a newspaper in Zapotecan. Mexico's Indian groups speak over fifty languages and dialects, and thus far the movement has been to impose Spanish on these groups, as a unifying thread in the patchwork of speeches. All the schools have been conducted in Spanish, and the Indian pupils, who have never known a written language of their own, have had the double burden of learning to read and write in a foreign tongue. The results have not been good, for a language is the very breath of the inner life. Deprived of their own speech, the Indians have lost contact with their own culture and traditions, and their habitual forms of thought and feeling. And Mexico still remains a country in which nearly half the population is illiterate.

But now there is a new movement to conduct education in the indigenous languages. Education, pamphlets, newspapers, and books in the language of each pueblo, with Spanish coming later as the life of the pueblo changes and grows modern. The leaders of this movement are wise, but no wiser than the missionaries who came after the conquest, and set themselves to learning the native tongues for purposes of conversion. Only now the purpose is to create the Mexican Nation, unified and modern. So Andrés, who teaches at the National University, talked about a newspaper in Zapotecan, while the deputy listened,



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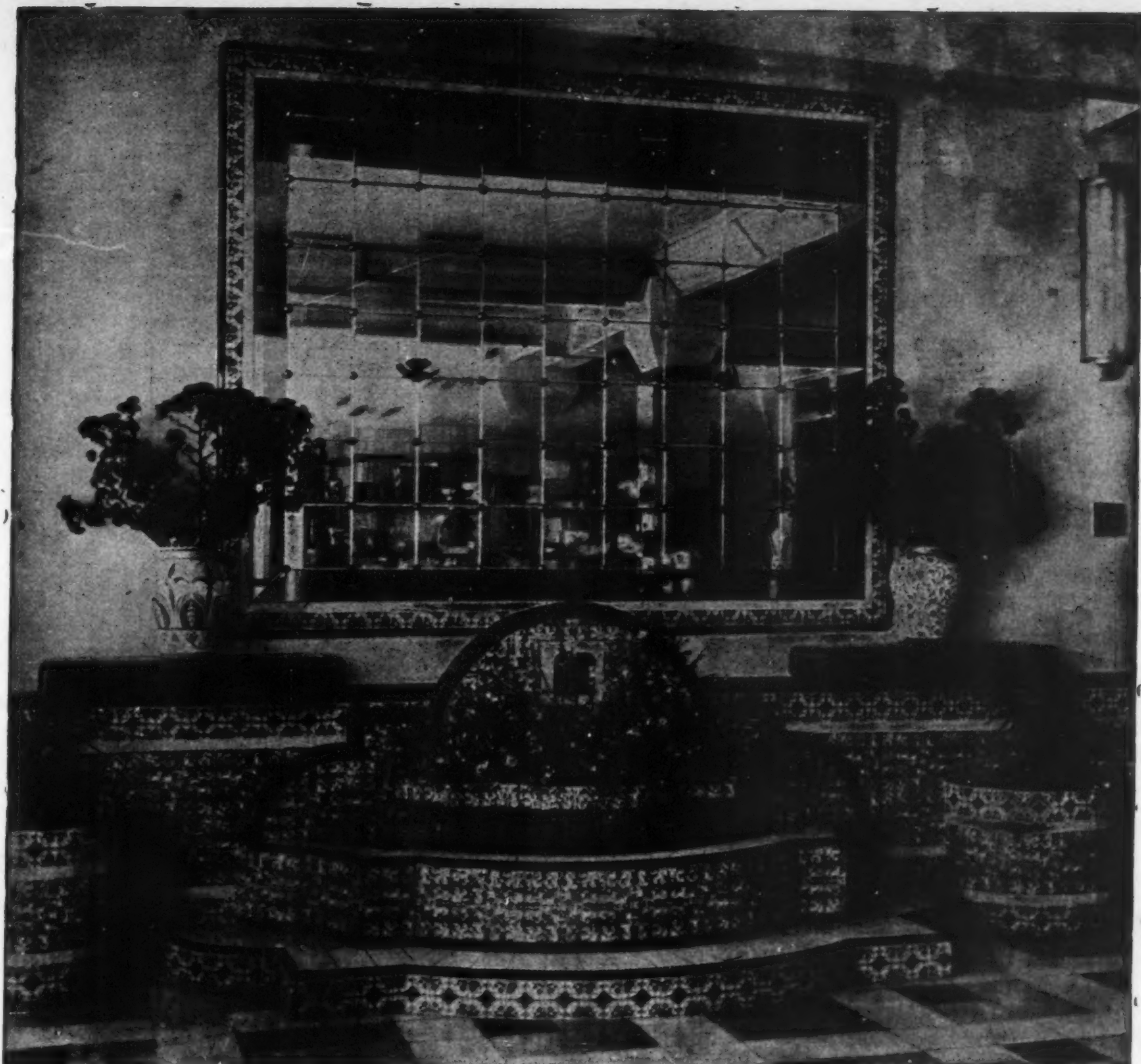


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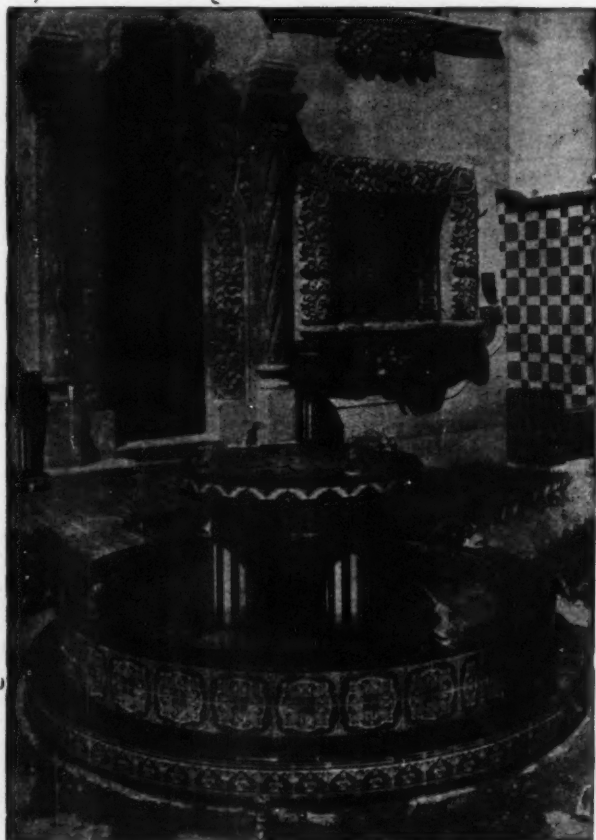
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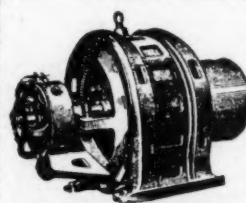
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his large sunburned hands resting on the table. Meanwhile Alpha's cousin had gone for his guitar, and routed out the best guitar-player in Juchitán, and the two of them came back, already thoughtfully plucking their instruments. Silence fell on the talk as they began 'La Llorona,' the love-song that is sung all over the isthmus.

You were coming from the church, Llorona, when I first saw you, in a huipil so splendid that I thought you were the Virgin.' The melody begins with a high querulous phrase, falls in a slow twisting scale reluctantly downward to the last held note. Then again the high-pitched beginning, complaint and reproach, and the slow downward twisting, the song caught in an endless spiral of yearning and anguish and despair. 'Ay, Llorona, Llorona of the heights! I am like the mule-driver who comes to the cold height to build him a fire.'

There must be a score of known stanzas, but the singers improvise more. Andres took the guitar, thrummed a moment, and began: 'Where you tread, Llorona, on the shore of the sea, where you tread on the sea, the waves bring pearls to the sand... Ay, Llorona, Llorona of the infinite waves...' This poetic exaggeration is greatly appreciated, but the circle of listeners who had gathered around us gave no sign. The market was deserted and the women had gone home, but the men stood listening with folded arms, relaxed and impassive. And the lighted clock in the market-place showed twelve before the song of Llorona was over, and the guitars rested on the table, and the listeners melted away as silent as they had gathered, their white trousers gleaming in the dark.

The next morning we took the bus of Tehuantepec, the town from which the isthmus receives its name. We waved good-bye to the women in the market-place as the bus pulled out, but their last shouted remarks were lost because we were busy pulling down



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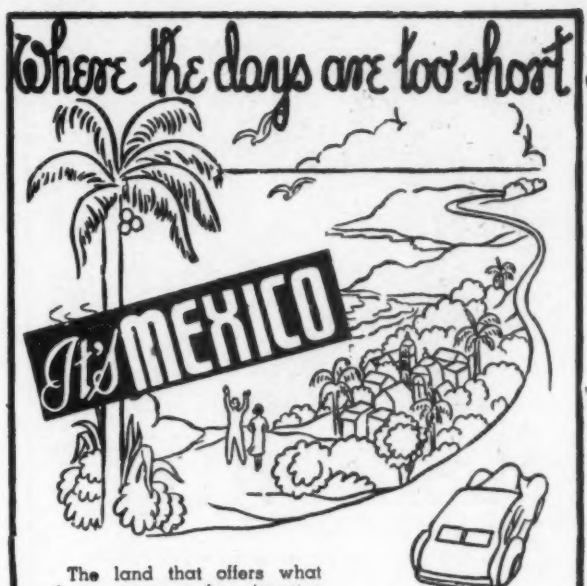
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the canvas against the dust. All through the ride over a road that pushed the jungle away on both sides, the dust was like an enemy pursuing us, and when the bus stopped the dust caught up and boarded it; but the women never covered the piles of tortillas that took up all the floor space. Humanity and freight travel together on the isthmus, where for the most part the roads are easier for travel by burro than by any wheeled vehicle. Andrés had said it was easier for those of Juchitán to go to Mexico City than to Oaxaca, capital of the state and not two hundred miles away.

The norther died down in Tehuantepec, and the air felt baked, and we went to the river where we lay down on the damp sand and argued about the women of Juchitán. Andrés said they were probably happier than the women of my country. I thought of the huge barn in back of the patio, where the women cooked on an open fire, stooping to the flames in the dark smoky air; and of how they walked back and forth across the patio, carrying a little water each time in a gourd—a stately and picturesque procession with their white ruffles sweeping the dust, but also a treadmill of unnecessary steps. And I said that at any rate the women of my country would be more efficient, and devise some system of running water, and so have time for something else. 'For what?' Andrés asked contemptuously. For dressing themselves and reading stupid books! He had been in the United States and felt he could talk with authority.

The sun went down and the bathers left the river and a last ox-cart crossed it, rumbling noisily on the opposite bank, and then there was silence broken only by the distant cry of children and the far-off whistling of the train. The railroad tracks run through all the length of Tehuantepec, close against the white mud houses, so that it has something of the air of a poor suburb in an industrial American city. Once Tehuantepec was the center of all the commerce in the isthmus, but now that commerce is a thing of the past, and there is only one train a day which may appear



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at any time between noon and midnight. We heard it whistling nearer now, and Chavo stirred and looked out over the river. 'This is the way we used to lie in the concentration camp,' he said, 'without food, without shelter, in the winter in France.' It grew dark and the mosquitoes began to bite, and we got up flailing our arms and went back to take the bus to Juchitán. It was my last night there. The next day we went to Salina Cruz to have a look the Pacific and from there I would go directly back to Mexico City.

Dust and jungle again, and the organ cactus lifting huge stiff fingers against the sky, and then a bend of the road whirling the sea into view. Salina Cruz is a deserted port, bewitched and spellbound, with a spell cast on it by history and the fate of nations. It has declined with all the isthmus, and the Panama Canal now draws the traffic that used to come to the isthmus ports. We walked to the end of the breakwater and looked back to the scattered white houses of the town, asleep between the sea and the low sierras that have ended their march to the sea. There was no sound, only the wind and the sea, silence and doom on everything else. On the wharves the lighterage cranes hung motionless over the rotting boards, a few rusting freight stood empty on the tracks. The little boy who showed us a place where we might bathe without danger from sharks said that a ship might be expected in a few months. Perhaps, he said.

We sent him ahead to order lunch at the hotel, and meanwhile we climbed the cliff to the lighthouse. The lighthouse keeper felt called on to justify his office.

'There will be boats,' he said, shaking his head at the Pacific as though it were a recalcitrant child, 'when the harbor is dredged. Now they cannot enter because of the sand.'

He invited us to share his tortillas, but we went back to the hotel which was justly advertised as 'the most ventilated in Salina Cruz.' For the wind blew like a gale through the empty corridors, and through

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the big diningroom and bar where there was never the merrymaking of sailors any more. The landlady's little girl served us with world-weary poise. She said she was going away to a school in Mexico City soon, and very glad of it, for it was a fine thing to be leaving Salina Cruz. 'There is nothing to do here,' she said. 'The movies come only once a week. But bathing?' She sighed as one who is denied even the simplest pleasures. 'The norther blows too strong, and besides, there are sharks.' She mentioned them with dainty disdain, as one might mention the buzzing of a fly.

There was a wedding in Salina Cruz too. In the big hall of the hotel the women were twisting white papers into long streamers, and hanging them from the ceiling. There would be a wedding dance under the streamers, but just one dance. Salina Cruz does not follow the customs of Juchitán, for the sea has weaned it from the rest of the isthmus.

And brought strange fish to it. At night in the tiny cantina near the docks we met a tall lanky Scotchman, and a cockney-speaking Englishman. Andrés looked at them and said with malicious joy: 'Speak to them in English. See if they understand you.' And the look on the face of the Scotchman when I addressed him in English was pure ecstasy. We all sat down and the Scotchman pledged us in Spanish and Gaelic and ordered a carton of beer to be sent to his house, where we were to go afterward to meet his wife. She was a native girl named Teresina, but the Scotchman called her Terry. He was terribly afraid that we would disapprove of his having married her, but he said he couldn't help it, because she was beautiful and he loved her, and he would lay down his life for her, or at least spend the rest of it in Salina Cruz just to be near her. We said we thought it was O.K., and Andrés drank, 'To the triumph of the mongrel!' The Englishman also was married to a native girl, but he was rather morose about it and silent. When he did speak, in a thick cockney brogue, I could not understand him. Andrés and Chavo looked at each other

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as much as to say: 'You see? She doesn't really know the king's English.'

Terry came in, and she was beautiful. She sat by smiling while the Scotchman told us how he wanted to leave Salina Cruz because there was no more work there. An American company had been dredging the harbor, but it was being replaced by a Mexican company. He might work with this company, but he didn't like working for Mexicans. So he wanted to go away from Salina Cruz, but he was afraid to travel with Terry, because in some place like Veracruz she would surely go off with another man. A younger man. We asked Terry about it and she said no, but we didn't feel sure. She had a baby with her, a very dark thin little thing, but it turned out that it was not hers and the Scotchman's. It seems they could not have a baby, and he asked us whether we thought it was because he was Scotch and Terry Indian. But anyway they had a dog with a wonderful name. He went outside and called it. 'Caralampio!'

I was worried about the train, but the Scotchman insisted that we go to his house. There Chavo banged the piano while the Englishman sang 'Rule, Britannia,' and the Scotchman did contortions, flinging his leg over his shoulder. On the wall there were big lithographs of the ships of the British navy, looking very becalmed and unmaritime. And when we left and walked across the plaza to the station, the town too seemed no more than a lithograph in the moonlight, so still and unreal it was, with only the norther blowing a gale from the land. And blowing all night, while the train creaked slowly through the sierras, away from the forgotten towns of the isthmus to the high central plateau of Mexico.



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